THE PICTORIAL RELATION: HOW MENTAL FILES CAN SUPPLEMENT THE RECOGNITIONAL THEORY OF DEPICTION

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Résumé
Cet article développe la conception de François Recanati des fichiers mentaux et des « relations info-génératives » pour proposer une analyse de la dépiction. Bien que l'engagement dans les images et la perception ordinaire conduisent tous deux à déployer des fichiers mentaux, la relation picturale par laquelle on recueille des informations sur les individus représentés diffère de la relation perceptive par laquelle on recueille des informations sur les individus perçus. En analysant la différence entre la relation picturale et la relation perceptuelle, je développe une analyse de la représentation basée sur les fichiers mentaux qui est censé compléter de manière fructueuse la théorie de la reconnaissance selon laquelle les images déclenchent la reconnaissance visuelle de leurs sujets.

Abstract
This paper draws on François Recanati's conception of mental files and "epistemically rewarding relations" to propose an account of depiction. Although both engagement with pictures and ordinary perception lead one to deploy mental files, the pictorial relation whereby one gathers information about the individuals depicted differs from the perceptual relation whereby one gathers information about the individuals perceived. By analyzing the difference between the pictorial relation and the perceptual relation, I will develop a mental-file based account of depiction that is meant to fruitfully supplement the recognitional theory according to which pictures trigger visual recognition of their subjects.

1. Introduction

Drawing on Ernst Gombrich's (1963, 4) insightful metaphor, one can characterize pictures as "keys which happen to fit into biological or psychological locks, or counterfeit coins which make the machine work when dropped into the slot". If one associates what Gombrich calls "the machine" with visual recognition and what one might call "true coins" with the object depicted (as opposed to pictures as "counterfeit coins"), one obtains the core idea of the recognitional theory of depiction which has been developed by Flint Schier (1986), Gregory Currie (1995), and Dom Lopes (1996). Pictures, from this perspective, are artifacts that have the function of triggering the same visual recognitional capacities at work in recognizing objects in the flesh. Specifically, a picture depicts an object by triggering our visual capacity of recognizing that object.
A strength of the recognitional theory of depiction is that it is not committed to a specific account of pictorial experience. To wit, the recognitional theory is compatible with both experiential accounts according to which the viewer of a picture experiences the alternation of the illusion of the depicted scene and the veridical perception of the picture's surface (Gombrich 1960, Chasid 2014) and those according to which the viewer enjoys a peculiar "twofold" visual experience that simultaneously represents both the picture's surface and the depicted scene (Wollheim 1980, Hopkins 1996, Voltolini 2015). What matters, for the recognitional theory, is simply that the pictorial experience leads to visual recognition,

whatever the character of that experience. The recognitional theory, in other words, enables one to be pluralist about pictorial experience (cf. Lopes 2005).
The independence of the recognitional theory from the notion of pictorial experience, however, is acquired at the cost of deeply relying on another notion, namely, visual recognition. Hence, a recognitional account of depiction can succeed only if rests upon an adequate conception of visual recognition.
In this paper, I will rely on François Recanati's (2012) account of mental files to offer such conception. My argument is abductive: I will show that the mental-file based conception of visual recognition leads us to a recognitional theory of depiction which is more explanatorily effective and compelling than those offered by other recognitional accounts. Specifically, in § 1 I will present the mental-file framework and I will explain how it can contribute to analyze the notion of visual recognition. In §§ 2-3, I will propose a mental-file based recognitional account of depiction and highlight its virtues. In § 4-5, I will highlight the virtues of my proposal compared with other recognitional accounts. In §6, I will draw my conclusions.

2. Files

A mental file is a representational vehicle that allows us to gather information about a particular individual. As Robin Jeshion puts it, "Mental files bind together our information about the individuals they are about and individuate our cognitive perspective on those individuals" (2010, 129). Although the proper function of a mental file is to bind together information about *existing* individuals, mental files can be used also to gather information about non-existing ones. Kenneth Taylor (2010, 79) calls "referentially successful" the mental files that fulfill their proper function and "referentially fit but not successful" those that do not. Likewise, Recanati (2012, 63) introduces a "normative requirement" according to which the former files are "regular" since they *are* related to objects while the latter are "irregular" since they only *purport to be* related to objects. From this perspective, the tokening of a mental file is sufficient to produce an episode of singular thought, even if the file tokened is irregular. As Jeshion points out, singular thought is "thought from mental files" (2010, 129). A mental episode is a case of *successful* singular thought if it picks out a real object in the actual world, but it remains a case of singular thought even if there is no such object. Thus, one can have singular thoughts about both real and fictional entities.
According to Recanati (2012), singular thought always involves the impression of being related to the object the thought is about. If the mental file is "regular" there must be an actual relation while if the file is "irregular" the is no actual relation and yet deploying the file involves the impression of being related to the object: "the thought fails to have a singular content, though phenomenologically it feels as if it had a singular content" (Recanati 2013, 210). In this sense, singular though is essentially relational, at least in the phenomenological sense.
Recanati (2012, 57) states that mental files are such that "their reference is determined relationally rather than satisfactionally" and individuates two main "epistemically rewarding" relations whereby one can form singular thoughts. First, *perceptual* relations, which rests upon perception. Second, *mediated* relations, which require the mediation of communicative chains.
The *perceptual relation* allows one to pick out an object in one's surroundings thereby ascribing sensory features to it. The perception of a particular tree, for example, amounts to picking out that tree in thought and ascribing sensory features (e.g. a certain shade of green, a certain smell) to it. Picking out an object in this way involves the production of a "perceptual file", which, in its most basic form, is a "proto-file" (or "object-file"), that is, a file that "can only host information gained by perceptually attending to the object" (Recanati 2012, 64).

The objects picked out by perceptual files are the so-called "Spelke objects", that is, the objects that psychologist Elizabeth Speke (1990, 30) characterizes as "persisting bodies with internal unity and stable boundaries". The concept SPELKE OBJECT (henceforth I will use small caps to indicate concepts) enables the deployment of a perceptual file by yielding a sort of proto-conceptualization that one can make by merely sensory means. To wit, SPELKE OBJECT is the most basic form of what Peter Strawson calls a "sortal concept", that is, a concept that "supplies a principle for distinguishing and counting individual particulars which it collects" (Strawson 1959, 168). A sortal concept, so understood, is necessary for the formation of a mental file since it enables one to single out the individual that the mental file is meant to be about.

More sophisticated conceptualizations require the application of more fine-grained sortal concepts than SPELKE OBJECT, namely, concepts such as TREE, FLOWER, BEE, HORSE, HUMAN BEING, TABLE, CAR, and so on. According to Recanati, such conceptualizations involve not only the perception of an object but also the (either implicit or explicit) reference to the perceived object through an indexical term such as 'this' or 'that'. The indexical enables one to ascribe a sortal concept like TREE to the perceived object by (either implicitly or explicitly) thinking a thought such as 'this is a tree'. Thus, Recanati dubs "indexical file" a mental file that is constituted by a perceptual relation to an object and a stock of both sensory and conceptual information about it. (Indeed, Recanati considers also indexical files that deploy terms such as 'I', 'here', and 'now' instead of demonstratives such as 'this' or 'that' but, given the scope of this paper, for the sake of simplicity I will use 'indexical files' and 'demonstrative files' as if they were synonymous).

On the one hand, *perceptual* files rely on the concept SPELKE OBJECT that, we can assume, is somehow involved in perception itself in some sub-personal way; arguably, the application of SPELKE OBJECT is what turns a mere bunch of sensations into the perception of an object, thereby enabling the deployment of the perceptual file. On the other hand, *indexical* files rely on higher level sortal concepts that require supplementation of perception by the intellect. The indexical file, from this perspective, can be seen as an upgrade of the perceptual file whereby the sortal SPELKE OBJECT, which was crucial to the formation of the file itself, is replaced with a higher level sortal that turns the perceptual file into an indexical file.

The notions of perceptual relation, perceptual file and indexical file enable us to shed some light on visual recognition. To visually recognize an object is to deploy a mental file about it via a perceptual relation to it. Since there are two sorts of mental files that rest upon the perceptual relations, there can be two sorts of visual recognition. The first, which one may dub 'Spelke Recognition', involves the deployment of a *perceptual* file whereby the perceived object is just singled out via the basic concept SPELKE OBJECT. The second, which may be dubbed 'Sortal Recognition', involves the deployment of an *indexical* file whereby the perceived object is subsumed under a higher level sortal concept such as TREE or HORSE.

To see how this notion of visual recognition applies to pictures, we shall also consider the other relation that according to Recanati enables one to deploy mental files, namely, the mediated relation whereby one can gather information about an object without the need of perceiving it. The paradigm mediator, in this sense, is the proper name. The subject who understands a name uttered by a speaker exploits a communicative chain to pick out an object in thought, and to acquire information about it. The utterance of the proper name is the ending link of a communicative chain whose starting link involved an immediate contact with the bearer of that name. That chain causally relates the subject who understands the name to the bearer of that name, and if that name is included in a meaningful sentence (e.g. 'Carneades was a philosopher who lived in Athens many centuries ago') the subject can exploit the chain-based relation to acquire conceptual information about that bearer. Picking out an object in thought by understanding *a name* thus produces a *chain-mediated file*, which is constituted by a

relation to an object to be supplemented with a stock of conceptual information about that object. Picking out an object in thought by understanding *a picture*, on the other hand, produces another sort of file, which I am going to discuss next.

3. Pictures

Let me call 'pictorial relation' the relation by which pictures enable one to gather information about the depicted objects into mental files. The pictorial relation differs from the perceptual relation since the link between the viewer and the depicted objects is mediated by something else, namely the picture. Moreover, the pictorial relation differs from the perceptual relation since, in the latter, one locates the perceived objects in one's surroundings, whereas the former does not allow one to do so.

The pictorial relation, in this sense, resembles the mediated relation, which also enables one to pick out objects that are not located in one's surroundings. Nevertheless, the pictorial relation differs from the mediated relation based on linguistic chains since pictures, unlike language, provide one with sensory information about the object picked out.

A picture is a symbol (i.e. a publicly accessible representation) that, as such, supplies not only a relation to an object but also sensory information about it. By contrast, words, as such, do not provide any information about the objects to which they refer. "Carneades" does not say anything about Carneades (except that he is the bearer of this name) whereas a picture of Carneades provides us with some sensory information about Carneades. Names can only provide information about the objects they refer to if such words are used into sentences. Yet, in this case, the information is conceptual, not sensory. A picture, instead, is a symbol that, as such, can provide one with sensory information about the object symbolized.

If all this is right, the pictorial relation cannot be traced back to either the perceptual relation or the linguistically mediated relation. It deserves to be treated as a special relation by which one can deploy mental files, say 'pictorial files,' that enable one to gather sensory information about absent objects.

Pictorial files are like perceptual and indexical files since they all allow viewers to store *sensory* information about objects. Yet, perceptual files and indexical files also allow one to gather information about the location of an object in a system of axes centered at one's body—namely, one's "egocentric space" (Evans 1982; Alsmith 2021). Pictorial files, instead, only allow one to gather information about the location of an object in a system of axes centered at a certain viewpoint, which does not correspond to the location of one's body.

Depicted objects are not in the region of our spatial system where we see them, and we are perceptually aware that they are not there (cf. Matthen 2005). While the perceptual relation gives the object a unique location in *our own* spatial system, the pictorial relation only gives the object a location in *some* spatial system. That is why the pictorial relation, unlike the perceptual relation, does not allow the viewer to establish whether the object really exists and, in case it does, where it is. The viewer of a picture can only establish where the object is situated in the pictorial space, not in the unified spatiotemporal system in which the viewer's body has its place. Following Noël Carroll (1996), I call this feature "detachment" and I argue that this is the hallmark of the pictorial relation, which allows one to acquire sensory information about an object but does not to allow one to locate that object in one's spatiotemporal system.

4. Twofileness

Recanati (2012, 20) calls "epistemically rewarding relations" the relations to objects whereby one gathers information and updates mental files about those objects. The perceptual relation

and the pictorial relation are both epistemically rewarding since they both allow one to gather information into mental files. However, the pictorial relation is not as rewarding as the perceptual relation since it suffers an epistemic gap due to what I have called detachment. The pictorial relation, indeed, allows one to pick out an object from a scene and gather information about the sensory features of that object into a mental file, but does not enable one to relate the object's spatiotemporal context to one's own egocentric context.

However, there is some egocentric information that one can gather while looking at a picture. One cannot locate the *depicted* objects in one's spatiotemporal system, but can locate the *depicting* object, namely the picture itself, in that system. One sees the picture's surface as located in one's spatiotemporal system, that is, as being exactly where it appears to be. In this sense, one enjoys a *perceptual* relation to the picture's surface, not a *pictorial* relation. In virtue of this relation, one can deploy an indexical file which gathers information about an object in our environment and subsumes it under the sortal PICTURE. Our mental file system connects the indexical file, which relates us to the picture's surface, to the pictorial file, which relates us to a depicted object. This connection, which I dub 'pictorial twofileness', can play an explanatory role in the recognitional theory of depiction that is analogous to that played by the notion of twofoldness in Wollheim's experiential account. However, the notion of twofileness, unlike that of twofoldness, does not require two simultaneous perceptual *experiential* folds, one about the picture's surface and the other about the depicted object, but only two simultaneously deployed mental files, namely, one indexical file about the picture's surface and one pictorial file about the object depicted. Twofileness, in this sense, is a much less controversial notion than twofoldness since it does not require any commitment to a peculiar phenomenology of picture perception.

The notion of twofileness can be clarified by means of what Recanati (2012, 50) calls "sharing", that is, a mental operation that connects two files whose objects share a certain relational predicate. For example, if one sees a flower in a vase, her flower-file and her vase-file will share the predicate 'X being in Y' (of course, the flower will share it as a X, the vase as a Y). Twofileness is a special case of sharing in which the files connected are of different types, namely an indexical file and a pictorial file. The predicate they share has the form 'the appearance of X depends on the presence of Y', where X is the object of the pictorial file while Y is the object of the indexical file. This dependence matches the fact that the pictorial file is deployed in virtue of the deployment of the corresponding indexical file in such a way that the sensory information gathered in the pictorial file comes from the object picked out by the indexical file.

Beside sensory information, the indexical file about the picture as an object in one's environment can also gather information about history of making, thereby supplying what Wollheim (1980) calls the picture's "standard of correctness", which enables the viewer to deploy the pictorial file in the appropriate way. The indexical file, in this way, becomes a sort of meta-file that governs the deployment of the pictorial file. As Wollheim (1980, 137) puts it, "What the standard does is to select the correct perception of a representation out of possible perceptions of it."

To sum up, the *perceptual* file about the picture allows one to produce another file, namely a *pictorial* file whereby one picks out a depicted object from *its* immediate surroundings and acquires sensory information about it. This relation between the subject and the depicted object is afflicted by detachment, since one cannot locate that object in *one's* surroundings, in one's own spatiotemporal system—more specifically, in the region of one's environment where it appears to be. Nevertheless, by means of the indexical file about the picture's surface one can gather information about history of making that may enrich the pictorial relation to the depicted object thereby overcoming detachment.

The mental-file framework thus enables us to bring Wollheim's notion of the standard of correctness at the core of the recognitional theory of depiction. The standard of correctness, from this perspective, is the information gathered in the indexical file about the picture that enables one to fruitfully enrich the pictorial files whereby one recognizes what is depicted. There is a variety of ways in which pictorial files concerning depicted objects can be enriched by the indexical file as a meta-file concerning the picture itself. Here are some paradigmatic cases.

a) Directly referential enrichment (e.g. televised events, CCTV, videocalls, photographic reportages, pictorial testimonies). The meta-file supplies information about the place and time in which the depicted scene takes place, thereby allowing one to locate the depicted objects in one's spatiotemporal system. In this way the enriched pictorial file can play a referential role epistemically analogous to that played by indexical files.

b) Fictional enrichment (e.g. fiction films, paintings of fictional scenes). The meta-file prescribes one to locate the depicted objects in a unitary spatiotemporal system different from one's own. In this case the pictorial file plays an "as if" referential role that corresponds to that played by the chain-based files associated to the names of fictional characters. In both cases, types of mental file whose proper function is to enable reference to real objects are exploited within a cultural practice to elicit "as if" experiences of referring to fictional objects. In Taylor terms, such files are referentially fit but not successful; in Recanati's terms they are irregular files.

c) Descriptively referential enrichment (e.g. identikits, photographs included in personal documents such as passports). The meta-file specifies that the depicted object is to be treated as a cluster of sensory features that constitutes a certain appearance, which functions as a visual description whereby a physical object can be *perceptually* picked out, namely, the object whose appearance is this.

d) Purely descriptive enrichment (e.g. pictures of animals or artifacts on dictionaries, pictures of men or cars on traffic signs). Just as in (c), the meta-file specifies that the depicted object is to be treated as a cluster of sensory features that constitutes an appearance, which functions as a visual description. Yet, in this case, the function of the description is not to pick up a particular physical object but to symbolize a class of physical objects that satisfy this description. In other words, the depicted appearance exemplifies some sensory features (usually shape, possibly colour) that characterize the (typical) members of the class symbolized.

So far, we have considered sorts of *epistemically* rewarding enrichment, which offsets detachment so to allow one to form beliefs or imaginings about the depicted objects. Let me now consider, instead, three sorts of *aesthetically* rewarding enrichment:

e) Poetic enrichment (e.g. still-life paintings, surrealist paintings, abstract paintings). While epistemically rewarding enrichment offsets detachment to allow one to form beliefs or imaginings about the depicted objects, *poetically* rewarding enrichment specifies that detachment is not to be offset since it has been intended by the picture's maker as a peculiar experiential effect to be enjoyed as such. For instance, the viewer of a still life painting (as opposed to the viewer of a historical painting) is not meant to struggle to understand where and when the table, the cups, and the fruits have their place in the global order of the universe, but simply to recognize them and enjoy their appearances. Abstract paintings such as Wassily Kandinsky's or surrealist ones such as Yves Tanguy's can be seen as a limit case of poetic enrichment in which not even sortal concepts can be applied to the content of pictorial files except the basic SPELKE OBJECT.

f) Expressive enrichment (e.g. caricatures, expressionist paintings). The meta-file specifies that some sensory features among those packed into the pictorial file are to be interpreted as

representing some non-sensory features that the picture's maker attributes to the depicted object.
g) Stylistic enrichment (e.g. paintings and drawings in which we can feel, as it were, the touch of the artist). The indexical file as a meta-file specifies that a proper appreciation of a picture should focus on how the sensory features of the picture's surface which are gathered in the indexical file itself constitute the sensory features of the depicted object which are stored in the pictorial file.

5. Recognition

Recanati's account of mental files enables us to refine the notion of visual recognition so as to fruitfully apply it to depiction. In ordinary experience, visually to recognize an object is to be in a perceptual relation to it that enables one to deploy a mental file about it. However, if we want to take depiction into account, this notion should be modified as follows: visually to recognize an object is to be in an *either perceptual or pictorial* relation to it that enables one to deploy a mental file about it. Let me call *pictorial recognition* the form of visual recognition based on the pictorial relation, that is, the variant of the perceptual relation that, as said earlier, involves detachment and twofileness.
Just like ordinary visual recognition, pictorial recognition involves the deployment of a file which can rely on either Spelke Recognition or Sortal Recogntion. The former is a mere *identification* which, in the very act of perception, conceptualizes the depicted object as nothing but a persisting body with internal unity and stable boundaries. The latter, instead, is a *categorization* of the depicted object that, at a higher cognitive level, subsumes the object of perception under a sortal concept. Moreover, if the viewer can "link" (Recanati 2012, 43) the pictorial file about the depicted object to another mental file about the same object, we have *reidentification* which enables us to identify the individual we see as an individual we have known by other means. In sum, there are three modes in which the pictorial file can function, namely, identification, categorization, and reidentification.
The main recognitional accounts of depiction take categorization as the central case of visual recognition. Currie (1995, 81), for instance, writes that "My visual capacity to recognize a horse is the capacity to associate some visual feature of what I see with the concept horse, thereby enabling me to bring what I see under that concept. In that case, when I see that the picture depicts a horse I must associate some visual feature of what I see, namely a picture, with the concept horse".
To account for pictures such as portraits, recognitional theorists trace reidentification back to categorization, that is, they cast reidentification as categorization under an individual concept. Paraphrasing Currie's, one might say that my visual capacity to recognize Churchill is the capacity to associate some visual feature of what I see with the concept CHURCHILL.
According to the main recognitional accounts of depiction, both general concepts and individual concepts can be cast as species of the "visual concept", which Lopes (2005, 46) defines as follow: "a visual concept of O is an ability to reliably identify O by its visual appearance in varying circumstances". The notion of mental file enables us to highlight the mechanism that underlies this "ability": one can "reliably identify" an object by deploying a mental file about that object. Moreover, the notion of mental file enables us to properly distinguish between the *individual* "visual concept", whereby one can reidentify the very same thing in varying circumstances (by reliably deploying the same mental file), and the *sortal* "visual concept", which is rather "a principle of collection of like things" (Strawson 1959, 226) whereby one can subsume different things in varying circumstances under the same category.
Claiming that understanding pictures requires deploying concepts, recognitional theories face the problem of explaining how one can understand a picture even if one lacks the concept of

the object depicted. Indeed, people often do so. As Currie (1995, 86) puts it, "If I have the capacity visually to recognize echidnas, that's because of my exposure to depictions of them, since I have never seen an echidna in the flesh". But how can one visually recognize an echidna when one sees it for the first time in a picture? Here is where identification as Spelke Recognition enters the picture. Seeing an echidna for the first time just involves recognizing it as—borrowing Spelke's terms—a persisting body with internal unity and stable boundaries. Then, one might form the sortal concept ECHIDNA by consulting a zoology book, thereby upgrading Spelke Recognition to Sortal Recognition. However, such an upgrade rests upon our capacity to enjoy pictures despite lacking the concepts of the objects depicted; the viewer of the pictures of an echidna who ignores echidnas in the first instance singles out a Spelke object which enables the later categorization of it as a specimen of the echidna species. Spelke Recognition grounds delayed categorization. The distinction between Spelke Recognition and Sortal Recognition thus enables us to explain how one can acquire the capacity visually to recognize echidnas because of one's exposure to depictions of them: one can do so by deploying basic pictorial files which can then lead one to the formation of higher level sortal concepts and indexical files.

Beside clarifying the notion of recognition, mental files enable us to explain how pictorial recognition is related to pictorial experience. The key notion for this purpose if twofileness, that is, the idea that the viewer of a picture recognizes not only what is depicted by deploying pictorial files about those things but also the picture itself by deploying an indexical file about it.

Specifically, the notion of twofileness enables us to connect the recognitional theory of depiction to experiential accounts such as Wollheim's and Gombrich's and to highlight the common file structure that underlies them. While Wollheim's (1980) "seeing-in" theory characterizes the pictorial experience as the simultaneous visual awareness of both the picture's surface and the depicted scene, Gombrich's (1960) "seeing-as" theory conceives of the pictorial experience as an alternation of a proper perception of the surface and a perceptual illusion of seeing the depicted objects. The notion of twofileness allows us to cast the difference between seeing-in and seeing-as as a difference in the deployment of the two files at play. The key feature of depiction is just that the viewer of a picture opens two files, namely, an indexical file about the picture itself and a pictorial file about a depicted object (cf. Zeimbekis 2010, 2015; Currie 2018). After being opened, each of these files can either be exploited or just remain available. If the indexical file about the picture is exploited in its sensory features (beside the conceptual features that implement the Wollheimian standard of correctness) there is *attention* to the picture's surface, otherwise there is only *awareness* of it. If both files are simultaneously exploited, one's experience gets closer to the seeing-in experience as described by Wollheim. Yet, if one only deploys the pictorial file while letting the indexical file in the background, one's experience gets closer to the seeing-as experience as described by Gombrich.

The point is that both seeing-in and seeing-as require the opening of two files of different types, an indexical one and a pictorial one (or a series thereof if the picture portrays more objects). The distinction between seeing-in and seeing-as concerns two different ways in which the subject can enjoys these two files, that is, either by exploiting them both or by foregrounding the pictorial file while keeping the indexical file on the background (or vice versa). Both cases rest upon twofileness, that is, the opening of both an indexical file and a pictorial file in the mind of the beholder. Although seeing-as exploits the two files alternately, they surely are both kept open since it would be too demanding for the file system to close one file and reopen the other at every alternation.

From this perspective, the alternative between Wollheimian seeing-in and Gombrichian seeing-as is no longer an alternative concerning which theory best describes the pictorial

experience we are stuck with, but rather an alternative between two ways in which pictures can be enjoyed, given the mental files we deploy when engaging with them.
The only case in which the indexical file about the picture's surface seems to be lacking is that of a trompe l'œil, that is, a picture that triggers the deployment of an *indexical* file deceivingly related to the depicted object. However, also this borderline case can be explained in terms of twofileness. A trompe l'œil, albeit *prima facie* deceiving, in principle allows a beholder to recognize it as deceiving. When one does so, one's indexical file turns into a pictorial file, and a new indexical file is produced in which one can store the correct sensory information about the picture's surface. Thus, although a trompe l'oeil does not elicit twofileness at first sight, it has a potential for twofileness that distinguishes it from ordinary objects thereby enabling us to treat it as a picture.

6. Appreciation

A theory of depiction is meant to explain not only how one understands pictures from an epistemic perspective (cf. Lopes 1996) but also how one appreciates them from an aesthetic perspective (cf. Lopes 2005). The mental-file framework enables us to shed light on the aesthetic appreciation of pictures by casting it as an interplay between mental files.
The basic interplay is that between the indexical file about the picture and the pictorial files about the depicted objects. The viewer of Titian's *Equestrian Portrait of Charles V*, for example, is meant to deploy both an indexical file about the painting as a 335×283 cm canvas painted in 1548 and now in the Museo del Prado, and two pictorial files about the two figures in the foreground.[1] The latter files, in the first instance just involves categorization: the viewer visually is meant to recognize a man and a horse. However, by relying on the information about history of making stored in the indexical file about the picture, one can not only *categorize* the main subject of the portrait as a man but also *identify* him as Charles V, thereby linking the pictorial file about the man portrayed to a chain-mediated file about the man who was Holy Roman Emperor from 1519 to 1556. The appreciation of this painting can be further developed by deploying pictorial files about natural objects in the background such as tree, mountains, and clouds, as well as about artifacts in the foreground such as the lance, the helmet, the armor, the sash, and the trim. Drawing on information stored in the indexical file about the picture, one then can interpret the lance as an allusion to Saint George, and the redness of the helmet, of the sash, and of the trim as symbolizing the Catholic faith in the wars of the 16th century. Crucial to the aesthetic appreciation of this painting is the interplay between all those pictorial files about the relevant depicted entities and the sensory information stored in the indexical file about the painting itself. One can appreciate, for instance, the minute brushstrokes that detail the artifacts in the foreground as opposed to the broad stretches of color and strong brushstrokes that represent the natural objects in the background.
Other paintings enable us to play with mental files in even more complex ways. Consider, for example, Titian's *Allegory of Prudence*.[2] The indexical file about the painting identifies a 76.2×68.6 cm canvas which one can now see in the National Gallery, London. The pictorial files that one can deploy while looking at this painting are multifarious. In the first instance, one can *categorizes* the figures above as three men—to wit an old man, an adult and a boy—and the figures below as a wolf, a lion, and a dog, thereby deploying six pictorial files. The relation between these entities, however, is not as immediate to understand as that between the man and the horse in the *Equestrian Portrait of Charles V*. Indeed, the three men and the three

[1] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Equestrian_Portrait_of_Charles_V#/media/File:Carlos_V_en_M%C3%BChlberg,_by_Titian,_from_Prado_in_Google_Earth.jpg
[2] https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/a7/Titian_-_Allegorie_der_Zeit.jpg

animals overlap so much that the viewer might be tempted to deploy a further pictorial file to *identify* a puzzling six-headed Spelke object, and maybe even two further pictorial files to *identify* two other Spelke objects, namely, a three-headed man and a three-headed animal.
All these further files can contribute to properly appreciate the painting provided that one relates them to the inscription in Latin that can be stored in indexical file about the painting. The meaning of this inscription is the following: "from the experience of the past, the present behaves prudently, lest it spoil future actions". In the wake of Erwin Panofksy's (1955) interpretation of the painting, one can cast this sentence as suggesting that the three-headed man is an allegory of time as consisting of past, present and future, while the three-headed animal is an allegory of the mind in which the wolf represents memory, the lion prudence, and the dog confidence. By drawing a connection between past and experience, present and prudence, and future and action, the inscription also encourages the viewer to identify the depicted subject as a six-headed entity that unifies time and the mind in one whole.
If one endorses also the most controversial bits of Panofsky's interpretation (cf. Cohen 2000), one can then *reidentify* the three men by linking the pictorial files about them to mental files formed through other causal chains. Specifically, the old man can be reidentified as Titian himself, the adult as his son Orazio and the boy as Titian's distant relative and pupil Marco. Deploying these files enables one to appreciate the painting not only as an allegory but also as a portrait, thereby enjoying the abstractness of the former together with the concreteness of the latter. The painting, in this sense, reveals itself to be both a metaphysical reflection on time and the mind and a historical homage to the Vecelli family.
To sum up, the aesthetic appreciation of the *Allegory of Prudence* along the lines that Panofsky suggests requires the interplay between three pictorial files about men, three pictorial files about animals, three pictorial files about multi-headed creatures, and one indexical file about the picture itself which enables us to appreciate how content and form interact. For instance, by relating the pictorial files to the indexical one, we can notice that the old man and the wolf, as allegories of past and memory, are obscured by shadow while the adult and the lion, as allegories of present and prudence, lie between shadow and light, and the boy and the dog, as allegories of future and confidence, are blurred by an excess of light. Form, in this sense, is inextricable from content. As Panofsky (1955, 167-168) puts it, "Titian's picture [...] is what the modern beholder is apt to dismiss as an 'abstruse allegory'. But this does not prevent it from being a moving human document [...] And it is doubtful whether this human document would have fully revealed to us the beauty and appropriateness of its diction had we not had the patience to decode its obscure vocabulary. In a work of art, 'form' cannot be divorced from 'content': the distribution of colour and lines, light and shade, volumes and planes, however delightful as a visual spectacle, must also be understood as carrying a more-than-visual meaning". The mental-file framework enables us to highlight the mental mechanisms whereby the viewer decodes the picture's "obscure vocabulary", grasps its "more-than-visual meanings", and relate them to the sensory features of the pictorial vehicle.

7. Conclusions

My paper can be read in two ways. In the first instance, as a supplementation of Recanati's mental-file framework with an account of pictorial communication. Depiction, indeed, lies somehow in between perception and language, which are the paradigm cases analyzed by Recanati. Thus, if one want to include pictorial communication in the mental-file framework, one should introduce a new epistemically rewarding relation and a new type of files (the pictorial relation and the pictorial file respectively), beside the epistemically rewarding relations (viz. the perceptual and the mediated) and the types of files (viz. the perceptual, the indexical, and the chain-mediated) on which Recanati focuses. My paper, however, does not

limit itself to supplementing the mental-file framework with the recognitional theory of depiction but also aims to use the former to shed light on the latter. In other words, my paper does not only *translate* the recognitional theory of depiction in terms of mental files but also struggles to *clarify and explain*, through the mental file framework, how pictorial recognition occurs. Ideally, the paper is meant to achieve the translation goal and the explanation goal at the same time; pictorial recognition is meant to be clarified and explained in virtue of its translation in the mental file framework. I acknowledge, however, that the proponents of garden-variety recognitional accounts of depiction might state that their proposals also have the resources to clarify and explain the issues that I have addressed by drawing on Recanati's notions of epistemically rewarding relations and mental files. In this paper, I have not argued against that possibility. I limited myself to showing that epistemically rewarding relations and mental files lead us to a complete and compelling recognitional account of depiction which might be harder to build from without Recanati's framework.

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