



UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI
DI TRENTO

Dipartimento di Psicologia
e Scienze Cognitive

Department of Psychology and Cognitive Science

SEMINARY DiPSCo

Pictorial Experience in the Light of Vision Science

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Abstract:

This paper has two aims. The first is to develop an account of the structure of pictorial experience that I refer to as weak onefoldness. Pictorial experience is onefold in the sense that its content reflects a single, consistent interpretation of the retinal image. Pictorial experience is only weakly onefold, however, in that it typically attributes certain combinations of properties to the 2D, pictorial surface and to objects in phenomenally 3D, pictorial space at the same time. Having the experience as of virtual depth and 3D structure, when viewing a picture, I argue, excludes representing some, but not all of a picture's surface properties. A second aim is to reconcile the claim that pictorial experience and seeing face-to-face are psychologically continuous with the observation that the former experience doesn't typically dispose the perceiver to believe that its objects are real. "Unlike perceptual consciousness," Robert Hopkins writes, pictorial experience "is non-committal about the reality of its objects" (2012: 434). Other authors in this connection refer to a feeling of "presence" or "self-standing appearance" that accompanies seeing face-to-face, but is conspicuously absent when looking at a picture (Sartre 1940/2004, Michotte 1960, Matthen 2005, Martin 2010). A recent empirical account of stereopsis, I propose, makes such reconciliation possible. According to the account, the reason that pictorial experience doesn't dispose the perceiver to believe that she is seeing a real object is that it fails to specify the object's location at some absolutely-scaled distance in depth.

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