

Images, Intentionality and Inexistence¹

Abstract

The possibilities of depicting non-existents, depicting non-particulars and depictive misrepresentation are frequently cited as grounds for denying the platitude that depiction is mediated by resemblance. I first argue that these problems are really a manifestation of the more general problem of intentionality. I then show how there is a plausible solution to the general problem of intentionality which is consonant with the platitude.

I

It is a platitude that whereas words are connected to what they represent merely by arbitrary conventions, depictions are connected to what they represent by resemblance. The important difference between my portrait and my name, for example, is that whereas my portrait is connected to me by my portrait's resemblance to me, my name is connected to me merely by an arbitrary convention. The objective of this paper is to reconcile the platitude that depiction is mediated by resemblance with the intentionality of depiction or, in other words, with the problematic possibilities of depicting non-existents, depicting non-particulars and depictive misrepresentation.

The problem of the depiction of non-existents can be appreciated by considering the following trilemma, which consists of three theses which are individually plausible, but jointly inconsistent:

- (1) All depictions resemble what they represent
- (2) Resemblance is a relation between existents
- (3) Some depictions represent non-existents

¹ Thanks to David Chalmers, Andy Egan, Daniel Friedrich, Frank Jackson, Uriah Kriegel and Daniel Stoljar as well as audiences at the Australian National University and the University of Sydney.

The first two theses imply that depictions only represent existents, but this is incompatible with the third thesis, that some depictions represent non-existents. So there is a prima facie inconsistency between the platitude that depiction is mediated by resemblance and the possibility of the depiction of non-existents.

The first thesis, that all depictions resemble what they represent, is plausible because it is suggested by the platitude that depiction is mediated by resemblance. Since the Mona Lisa's representation of Lisa, for example, is mediated by resemblance, it seems to follow that the Mona Lisa must resemble Lisa. Similarly, if Holmes' portrait's representation of Holmes is mediated by resemblance, it seems to follow that Holmes' portrait must resemble Holmes. (Note that non-figurative paintings, which may seem like obvious counterexamples to the first thesis, are not classified as depictions because they are intuitively not the same kind of representation as figurative pictures.)

The second thesis, that resemblance is a relation between existents, is plausible because it follows from the analysis of resemblance as a relation which obtains between two things if and only if they share properties. Peas in a pod, for example, resemble each other because they share the properties of greenness, roundness and yuckiness. Since non-existents do not have properties, it follows that resemblance is a relation between existents. Peas, for example, cannot be green without existing, so only existent peas can resemble each other in respect of greenness. Similarly, since Santa cannot be red without existing, Santa's portrait cannot resemble Santa in respect of being red unless Santa exists.

The third thesis, that some depictions represent non-existents, is supported by intuitive examples. The most obvious example is depiction of fiction: Holmes does not exist, but *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* contains illustrations which depict Holmes. But examples are not confined to depiction of fiction: it is also possible to depict things which are thought to exist, but in fact do not. For example, Vulcan, the planet hypothesized to be the cause of perturbations in the orbit of Mercury, does not exist, but there are depictions of Vulcan. Those depictions that were produced when Vulcan was really thought to exist are no more fiction than depictions of the other

nine planets, since the mere discovery that a depiction is not veridical is not sufficient to make it fictional.

Two other problems arise from the intentionality of depiction. The first is the problem of depicting non-particulars. It arises from the fact that it seems possible to depict something without depicting something in particular, but impossible to resemble something without resembling something in particular. A picture may depict a horse, for example, without depicting Phar Lap, Bucephalus, Incitatus or any other particular horse. But a picture cannot resemble a horse without resembling a particular horse, since a picture cannot share a property with horses in general, but only with particular horses such as Phar Lap, Bucephalus and Incitatus. Correctly resolving the trilemma concerning the depiction of non-existents should resolve this problem too.

The second is the problem of depictive misrepresentation. Suppose, for example, that the police are completely misinformed about the appearance of a dangerous criminal. The police believe that the criminal is brunette, but he is blonde, the police believe he is bearded, but he is shaved, the police believe that he is tall, but in fact he is short, and so on. If the police drew a wanted poster of this man, then it would resemble someone who is brunette, bearded, tall and so on, and so would not resemble the criminal in the relevant respects. But despite failing to resemble the criminal, the drawing would still succeed in representing him.² Correctly resolving the trilemma concerning the depiction of non-existents should resolve this problem too.

Section Two considers Robert Hopkins' proposal to reject the thesis that all depictions resemble what they represent by analysing depiction in terms of experienced rather than genuine resemblance. Section Three considers Nelson Goodman's proposal to reject the thesis that all depictions resemble what they represent on the grounds that depiction, unlike resemblance, is not unequivocally relational. Section Four considers the possibility of denying the thesis that resemblance is a relation between existents by postulating non-existent objects. Section Five argues for denying the thesis that some depictions represent non-existent

² This example is from Kaplan (1969, 199).

objects by arguing that depiction is a relation between states of affairs. Section Six concludes.

II

It is possible to resolve the trilemma of depicting non-existents by denying the first thesis, that all depictions resemble what they represent, without denying the platitude that depiction is mediated by resemblance. To see how this is possible, recall that resemblance is obviously insufficient for depiction. Everything resembles itself, for example, but not everything is a depiction of itself. To provide for sufficiency, analyses of depiction usually combine resemblance with various intentional attitudes such as beliefs, intentions or experiences. Given that resemblance is not a sufficient condition for depiction, it's not implausible to suggest that in the final analysis resemblance won't be a necessary condition for depiction either.

Robert Hopkins (1994; 1998) has proposed to exploit this gap in order to deny the first thesis of the trilemma without having to deny the platitude that depiction is mediated by resemblance. According to Hopkins' (1998) analysis:

Something depicts another if and only if viewers are intended to *experience* the former as resembling the latter in outline shape.

So, for example, the Mona Lisa is supposed to depict Lisa, according to Hopkins, because Leo intended viewers to experience the Mona Lisa as resembling Lisa in outline shape. (Hopkins (1998) acknowledges that accidentally taken photographs need not be intended to be experienced, but this complication isn't important here.)

By embedding resemblance within the context of experience, Hopkins' analysis retains the platitude that depiction is mediated by resemblance but avoids the consequence that resemblance is a necessary condition of depiction. Just as, for example, having an experience of Santa does not entail that Santa exists, having an experience which represents a picture as resembling Santa in some respect does not entail that the picture genuinely resembles Santa in that respect. More generally, although it is impossible for a picture to resemble something that doesn't exist, it is possible for a picture to be experienced as resembling something which doesn't exist.

As well as the depiction of non-existents, Hopkins' proposal appears to resolve the problems of depicting non-particulars and of depictive misrepresentation. Although, for example, it is not possible to resemble a horse without resembling Phar Lap, Bucephalus, Incitatus or some horse in particular, it is possible to experience a picture as resembling a horse without experiencing it as resembling any particular horse. In general, although it is not possible to resemble something without resembling something in particular, it is possible to experience a picture as resembling something without experiencing it as resembling something in particular, since it is possible in general to experience something without experiencing something in particular.

Similarly, Hopkins' proposal appears to resolve the problem of depictive misrepresentation. Even if the police, for example, produced a wanted poster of a criminal which, due to misinformation, failed to resemble the criminal in the relevant respects, the wanted poster may still be experienced as resembling the criminal in those respects. Since, in general, experiences are capable of misrepresentation, it is possible to experience pictures as resembling what they represent even when they in fact fail to do so. So by analysing depiction in terms of experienced resemblance and dropping the thesis that all depictions resemble what they represent, Hopkins' analysis appears to be able to reconcile the intentionality of depiction with the platitude that it is mediated by resemblance.

However, there is a serious problem with Hopkins' proposal. The problem is that by analysing depiction in terms of experienced resemblance Hopkins merely trades one kind of intentionality for another equally problematic kind. Experiences of non-existents, or hallucinations, are just as puzzling as depictions of non-existents, since it is plausible both that experiences are relations towards what is experienced and that relations cannot obtain towards non-existents. My seeing an apple, for example, seems to be a relation between me and the apple, but my hallucinating an apple cannot be such a relation, since in the case of hallucination there is no real apple for me to be related to. By trading the problem of depicting non-existents for the problem of hallucination, Hopkins' proposal merely shifts the bump in the rug.

The force of this objection may be brought out by considering the mirror image of Hopkins' proposal. One solution to the problem of hallucination is to analyse

experiences as relations to inner pictures or mental images. My hallucination of an apple, for example, could be construed as an unproblematic relation between me and an inner picture of an apple, instead of being construed as a problematic relation between myself and a non-existent apple. The problem of the experience of non-existents would then be replaced by the problem of the depiction of non-existents. But this replacement would produce no progress, because the problem of the depiction of non-existents is just as puzzling as the problem of hallucination. Replacing the problem of depicting non-existents with the problem of hallucination is equally unilluminating.

The moral of this objection is that the problems of depicting non-existents, depicting non-particulars and depictive misrepresentation are really manifestations of the more general problem of intentionality. This means that an adequate solution to the problems cannot presuppose a solution to the problem of intentionality. Instead, an adequate solution to the specific problems concerning depiction should be part of a broader solution to the problem of intentionality in general. Resolving the problem in the specific case of depiction involves showing how the solution to the problem of intentionality in the general case is consistent with the platitude that depiction is mediated by resemblance. The rest of the paper discusses whether any solutions to the problem of intentionality can meet this constraint.

III

Another way to motivate resolving the trilemma by denying the thesis that all depictions resemble what they represent is to deny the platitude that depiction is mediated by resemblance on the grounds that depiction – unlike resemblance – is not unequivocally relational. This strategy for resolving the problem is adopted by Nelson Goodman in *Languages of Art*. He writes “What tends to mislead us is that such locutions as ‘picture of’ and ‘represents’ have the appearance of mannerly two-place predicates and can sometimes be so interpreted. But ‘picture of Pickwick’ and ‘represents a unicorn’ are better considered unbreakable one-place predicates ...” (1968, 21-2). So the Mona Lisa, according to Goodman, depicts Lisa in a relational sense, whereas Santa’s portrait depicts Santa merely through falling under the unbreakable one-place predicate ‘being a Santa-depiction’.

As well as the depiction of non-existents, Goodman's proposal appears able to resolve the problems of the depiction of non-particulars and depictive misrepresentation. The depiction of non-particulars, according to Goodman, is depiction in the non-relational sense. It is supposed to be possible to depict a horse, for example, without depicting any horse in particular, because being a depiction of a horse is not construed by Goodman as bearing a relation to a particular horse such as Phar Lap, Bucephalus or Incitatus, but merely as falling under the unbreakable one-place predicate 'being a horse-depiction'. In general, depicting something without depicting anything in particular is supposed to be possible because being a depiction of something is not always bearing a relation to some thing, but merely falling under a one-place predicate.

Similarly, Goodman's proposal appears able to resolve the problem of depictive misrepresentation. Depictive misrepresentation, according to Goodman, involves a division between what is depicted in the relational and non-relational senses. A wanted poster produced by misinformed police, for example, may misrepresent a blonde clean-shaven criminal as bearded and brunette, because it is a depiction of a blonde clean-shaven criminal in the relational sense but also falls under the predicate 'being a bearded-brunette-criminal depiction'. So Goodman appears to be able to avoid the problem of depictive misrepresentation by construing pictorial reference as depiction in the relational sense and pictorial predication as depiction in the non-relational sense.

As well as appearing to resolve these problems, Goodman's proposal is an improvement on Hopkins', because it does not merely shift the bump in the carpet, but instead appears to form part of a solution to the general problem of intentionality. In the case of experience, for example, Goodman may argue that 'experience' is ambiguous between a relational and a non-relational sense. When I see the real apple, Goodman would say I have an experience in the relational sense, whereas when I hallucinate an apple, Goodman would say my experience is of an apple merely because it falls under the unbreakable non-relational predicate 'being an apple-seeing'. Thus, Goodman appears to be able to solve the problem of hallucination by denying that hallucination is relational.

So far, Goodman's proposal hasn't provided a resolution to the trilemma, because he hasn't said which of its theses must be rejected. However, it is clear that Goodman takes his account to motivate rejecting the first thesis. For example, he writes that "...the copy theory of representation takes a further beating here; for where a representation does not represent anything there can be no question of resemblance to what it represents." (1968, 25). Since, according to Goodman, depiction is unlike resemblance in that resemblance but not depiction is always a relation, depictions cannot always resemble what they represent. Thus, by denying that depiction is unequivocally relational, Goodman appears able to motivate resolving the trilemma by denying its first thesis.

But although Goodman appears to offer a compelling motivation for denying the platitude that depiction is mediated by resemblance, the proposal with which he replaces it is highly unsatisfactory. While it is obvious that certain pictures and representations fall under certain predicates, it seems that the reason pictures and representations fall under these predicates is because of the things they represent. Pegasus' portrait and 'Pegasus', for example, both fall under the predicate 'being a Pegasus-representation', but the explanation of this ought to be that there is something which both Pegasus' portrait and Pegasus represent. Without further explanation, Goodman's observation that different predicates apply to different representations is totally unilluminating.

IV

Just as it's possible to depict unicorns, although no unicorns exist, it's intuitively possible to resemble a unicorn, although no unicorns exist. And just as it's possible to depict a horse without depicting any horse in particular, it's intuitively possible to resemble a horse without resembling any horse in particular. This suggests that exactly the same reasons for denying that depiction is unequivocally relational may be brought forward for denying that resemblance is unequivocally relational. So the same motivation that Goodman gives for denying the thesis that all depictions resemble what they represent may be more naturally brought forward in order to

instead deny the thesis that resemblance is a relation between existents.³

The cost of this solution is that it is committed to denying not only the thesis that resemblance is a relation between existents but also the analysis of resemblance as the relation of sharing properties. Even though it is intuitively possible to resemble a horse without resembling any particular horse, it is impossible to share properties without sharing properties with at least one particular horse, since non-particular horses do not have properties. Similarly, even though it is intuitively possible to resemble Santa, it is not possible to share properties with Santa, since Santa does not have properties. Sharing properties is a relation, so if resemblance is sharing properties, then resemblance is also a relation. One cannot deny that resemblance is a relation without denying that resemblance is the relation of sharing properties.

But there is another way to deny the thesis that resemblance is a relation between existents, which does not incur the cost of denying that resemblance is sharing properties. Instead of denying that resemblance is a relation, it is possible to deny that resemblance is between existents. In order to do this it is necessary to posit that there are objects which don't exist, called Meinongian objects, and that depictions can be related to these objects. According to this proposal, Santa, although he does not exist, is a non-existent object who is capable of being resembled by Santa's portrait. In general, depictions that don't depict existents are still supposed by this proposal to bear the relations of resemblance and depiction to non-existent objects.

Postulating Meinongian objects – like Goodman's proposal but unlike analysing depiction in terms of other intentional notions – has the advantage that it provides a general solution to the problem of intentionality. In the case of experience, for example, hallucinatory experiences can be construed as relations towards non-existent objects. If, for example, I hallucinate an apple, then the relation that usually obtains between me and the existent apples I normally perceive instead obtains between me and the non-existent apple which I hallucinate. In general, intentional states that are

³ Hyman (2006, 65) advocates this strategy.

not about things which exist can be construed as states that are about Meinongian objects which don't exist.⁴

It might be objected that postulating non-existent objects does not genuinely resolve the trilemma, on the grounds that, since non-existent objects do not have properties, it is not possible to share properties with them and thus not possible to resemble them. For example, it might be argued that since Santa cannot be red without existing, a picture of Santa cannot resemble Santa in respect of being red without Santa existing. According to this objection, postulating non-existent objects is of no help in resolving the problem of the depiction of non-existents, since it is still impossible to resemble those non-existent objects.

However, it is standardly argued that Meinongian objects do have properties. Meinong's view holds that sentences such as 'The round square is round' and 'The round square is square' are true, even though no round square exists. In order to do this Meinong claims that the round square is a non-existent object which nevertheless has the properties of being round and being square. Similarly, a proponent of this position can argue that although Santa doesn't exist, he still has properties such as wearing a red coat, having a beard, being jolly and so forth and that although Vulcan does not exist, it still has the properties of being a planet, orbiting the sun and so forth. The postulation of non-existent objects to solve problems in other areas is already committed to postulating that non-existent objects have properties.

The Meinongian proposal is also able to resolve the problem of the depiction of non-particulars by postulating that there are non-existent objects which are also indeterminate. Depicting a horse but no particular horse, for example, can be analysed as a relation towards a non-existent object which has the property of being a horse, but lacks the properties of being Phar Lap, being Bucephalus, being Incitatus or being any other particular horse. In general, a depiction of something but not anything in particular can be analysed as a depiction of a non-existent object which has only the properties which the picture represents it as having. This treatment of the depiction of

⁴ See Parsons (1980) for a contemporary discussion of non-existent objects.

non-particulars exactly parallels the treatment of thoughts about non-particulars given by proponents of Meinong's position.

The problem of depictive misrepresentation is more difficult to resolve by postulating non-existent objects. Suppose, for example, that my portrait depicts me with three heads, when I in fact have only one head. This cannot be analysed as a relation between my portrait and a non-existent object with three heads, because my portrait is a depiction of me, and I am not a non-existent object. Though this problem is a difficult one for resolving the problem of depictive misrepresentation by postulating non-existents, it is worth noting that it is also a problem for Meinong's position in general: if I am thinking of myself with three heads, for example, this cannot simultaneously be a thought about myself and a relation between myself and a non-existent three headed object.⁵

Furthermore, though the postulation of non-existent objects is an attractive solution to the trilemma, it is less attractive as a general metaphysical position. The thesis that there are non-existent objects seems to be equivalent to the thesis that non-existent objects exist, but this is a contradiction. To avoid this contradiction a distinction has to be drawn between what there is and what exists, so that the claim that there are non-existent objects does not imply the claim that non-existent objects exist. But the Meinongian distinction between what exists and what there is seems to be a distinction without a difference, because the most compelling way to characterize what exists is as everything there is⁶

V

⁵ See Parsons (1995) for discussion of this problem.

⁶ It may be possible to develop Meinong's position by distinguishing between existent abstracta and existent concreta or between existent possibilia and existent actualia instead of by distinguishing between what exists and what there is. Since on this proposal abstracta, concreta, possibilia and actualia are all existents, this proposal provides a way of rejecting the third thesis, that some depictions represent non-existents, instead of a way of rejecting the second thesis, that resemblance is a relation between existents.

The first thesis of the trilemma, that all depictions resemble what they represent, together with the second thesis, that resemblance is a relation between existents, together imply that depiction is a relation between existents. It is this implication that produces the inconsistency with the third thesis, that some depictions represent non-existents. But that implication is plausible independently of whether or not all depictions resemble what they represent or whether resemblance is a relation between existents. For this reason, it seems that the most plausible resolution of the trilemma is to deny the third thesis, that some depictions represent non-existents. In this section, I will argue for rejecting the third thesis by construing depiction as a relation between states of affairs.

Depictions represent particulars, properties and states of affairs. The Mona Lisa, for example, represents Lisa herself, the property of smiling and the state of affairs of Lisa's smiling. I will argue for denying the thesis that some depictions represent non-existents by arguing that the apparent depiction of non-existent particulars is really the depiction of existent states of affairs. I will also argue for denying the first thesis as applied to particulars: not all depictions resemble the particulars they represent. But, I will argue, the first thesis is true as applied to states of affairs: all depictive states of affairs resemble the states of affairs they represent. Thus, the apparent depiction of non-existents is compatible with the platitude that depiction is mediated by resemblance.

A natural way to deny the thesis that some depictions represent non-existents is to deny that apparent depictions of non-existents depict particulars at all. It may be argued that Santa's portrait, for example, does not really depict any particular, on the grounds that Santa, the particular which Santa's portrait is purported to depict, does not exist. The same can be said of pictures of Pegasus and diagrams of Phlogiston: since the particulars these pictures are purported to represent do not in fact exist, it is reasonable to argue that portraits of Pegasus and diagrams of Phlogiston do not in fact depict particulars. Since, in general, non-existent particulars do not exist, it seems that the apparent depiction of non-existents cannot be the depiction of particulars.

But denying that apparent depictions of non-existents depict particulars has the disadvantage that it does not capture the obvious differences between depictions which are apparently of different non-existents. Depictions of Pegasus appear to be different from depictions of Santa because they depict different particulars: depictions of Pegasus depict Pegasus, whereas depictions of Santa depict Santa. If depictions of Santa and depictions of Pegasus do not depict particulars at all, then the difference between what they represent must not reside in the different particulars they represent. I will suggest in the following sections that different depictions of non-existents differ primarily by representing different states of affairs.

Holmes does not exist, but in other states of affairs he might have existed.⁷ So although depicting Holmes cannot be analysed as a relation towards Holmes himself it can, for example, be analysed as a relation towards the state of affairs of Holmes' smoking a pipe. And although the difference between depictions of Santa and depictions of Pegasus cannot be construed as a difference between which particulars they represent, it can be construed as a difference between the states of affairs which they represent: depictions of Santa depict states of affairs in which Santa exists, whereas depictions of Pegasus depict states of affairs in which Pegasus exists. So analysing depiction as a relation between states of affairs is able to resolve the problem of the depiction of non-existents.

No difficulty for the depiction of states of affairs is posed by inexistence because, unlike particulars which may simply exist or not, states of affairs may fail to obtain without ceasing to exist. Just as there is a fact of the Eiffel Tower's being in Paris, for example, there is a state of affairs of the Eiffel Tower's being in New York, although that state of affairs does not obtain. So since all states of affairs are existents, construing depiction as primarily a relation between states of affairs – including states of affairs which do not obtain – provides a way to deny the thesis that some depictions represent non-existents, while still accommodating the intentionality of depictive representation and thus resolving the trilemma.

⁷ This phrase is borrowed from Kripke (1963).

As well as the depiction of non-existents, analysing depiction as a relation between states of affairs resolves the problem of depicting non-particulars. The state of affairs which obtains if there is a tall man, for example, is distinct from the state of affairs of some particular man's being tall. So if depiction is a relation between states of affairs, then depicting a man without depicting any man in particular can be construed as a relation towards the state of affairs, for example, of a man's being tall, but not to a state of affairs of any particular man's being tall. In general, a depiction that doesn't depict something in particular can be analysed as a depiction of a state of affairs of something's, but not any particular thing's, having a property.

Similarly, depictive misrepresentation can be analysed as the depiction of a state of affairs which does not obtain. Although the police's picture, for example, does not resemble the criminal as he is, the state of affairs of the police's picture's having a certain colour resembles the state of affairs of the criminal's having the colour which the police believe him to have, since they are both states of affairs of something's having that colour. In general, depictions are accurate when the states of affairs they are of obtain, and inaccurate when the states of affairs they are of fail to obtain. So although the example of misrepresentation shows that not all depictions resemble the particulars they represent, it fails to show that depictive states of affairs do not resemble depicted states of affairs.

It might be objected that analysing depiction as a relation between states of affairs is still incompatible with the thesis that depictions resemble what they represent, because states of affairs do not resemble each other in the relevant respects. Depictions are supposed to resemble what they represent in ordinary respects such as colour and shape, but states of affairs do not have ordinary properties such as colour and shape. There are, for example, red particulars, but red states of affairs are no more possible than green numbers. If this objection is right, then arguing that depictions represent states of affairs does not resolve the trilemma, because it is incompatible with the thesis that all depictions resemble what they represent.

This objection can be answered by invoking resemblances between states of affairs which mirror the more ordinary resemblances which obtain between particulars. Two states of affairs resemble each other – in the relevant sense – if they share the property

of being states of affairs of something's having a certain property. The state of affairs of Santa's portrait's being partly red, for example, resembles the state of affairs of Santa's wearing a red coat, because both states of affairs have the property of being states of affairs of something's having the property of being partly red. The relevant respects of resemblance are not the ordinary properties of having certain colours and shapes, but the closely related properties of being states of affairs of thing's having those colours and shapes.

One clarification. Depictive and depicted states of affairs often differ in some of the properties – sometimes including shape and colour properties – which they are states of affairs of something's having. The state of affairs of a photograph's being black and white, for example, does not resemble the state of affairs of the photograph's subject's being coloured. Nevertheless, there are other properties – such as properties of shape and relative shading – such that the state of affairs of the photograph's having those properties still resembles the state of affairs of the photograph's subject's having those same properties. As long as it's possible to specify the respects in which depictions usually resemble objects, it's also possible to specify the respects in which depictive resemble depicted states of affairs.

As well as being compatible with the platitude that depiction is mediated by resemblance, analysing depiction as a relation between states of affairs has the advantage of being part of a general solution to the problem of intentionality. My hallucination of an apple, for example, can be analysed as a relation between me and an existent but non-obtaining state of affairs of an apple's being in front of me, instead of a relation between me and a non-existent apple. In general, experiences can be analysed as relations towards states of affairs: veridical experiences involve relations towards states of affairs which obtain, whereas hallucinations and illusions involve relations towards existent states of affairs which fail to obtain.

Three objections. First, it might be argued that analysing depiction in terms of states of affairs merely shifts the bump in the rug. The puzzle of the depiction of non-existents, according to this objection, has merely been replaced with the puzzle of how there can be states of affairs with non-existent constituents. The puzzle of how Santa's portrait can depict Santa even though Santa does not exist, for example, has

merely been replaced by the puzzle of how there can be a state of affairs of Santa's wearing a red coat if Santa does not exist to be a constituent of that state of affairs. If this is the case, then analysing depiction in terms of states of affairs fails to improve on analysing it in terms of experienced resemblance.

I accept that non-existents pose a problem for the analysis of states of affairs, but it is a problem that most analyses of states of affairs are able to answer. The theory I favour, for example, is that states of affairs are sets of possible worlds. But the solution is available in principle to other analyses of states of affairs and even to the view that states of affairs are primitive and unanalysable. All that is essential to the solution is that depictions apparently of non-existents are really depictions of states of affairs which do in fact exist, but may not obtain. Since the solution is available in principle to any theory of states of affairs which allows that there are states of affairs concerning non-existents, it seems best to remain neutral here about what the correct theory of states of affairs is.

Second, it might be objected that it is not possible to distinguish between general and particular states of affairs concerning non-existents without holding that some states of affairs have non-existent constituents. The particular state of affairs of Bucephalus' grazing, for example, differs from the general state of affairs of a horse's grazing because the former contains Bucephalus as a constituent whereas the latter does not. But since Pegasus does not exist, the particular state of affairs of Pegasus' flying cannot differ from the general state of affairs of a horse's flying by having Pegasus as a constituent, because Pegasus cannot be the constituent of a state of affairs without existing.

Some theories of states of affairs may accept this consequence. But if states of affairs are analysed in terms of possibility, as on the theory I favour, then the problem may be avoided by holding that some states of affairs have non-actual possibilia as constituents and by holding that non-actual possibilia exist. So the state of affairs of Pegasus' flying, for example, could differ from the state of affairs of a unique winged horse's flying because the former contains Pegasus, an existent non-actual possibilia, whereas the latter does not. In general, singular states of affairs apparently concerning

non-existents can be reconstrued as singular states of affairs concerning existent but non-actual possibilia.⁸

Sympathisers with this objection might reply that if existent non-actual possibilia must be introduced, it would be better to have analysed depiction as a relation towards those possibilia in the first place, rather than as a relation towards states of affairs. The problem with this proposal is that depictions do not straightforwardly resemble existent non-actual possibilia, since non-actual possibilia have no properties in the actual world and different properties in the different possible worlds in which they occur: Santa, for example, wears a red coat in some possible worlds, but a green coat in others.⁹ For this reason, depiction still has to be analysed in terms of resemblance between states of affairs, even if it is granted that non-actual possibilia exist.

Third, it might be objected that analysing depiction of non-existents, depiction of non-particulars and depictive misrepresentation in terms of a relation towards non-obtaining states of affairs does not improve upon Meinong's position, because the distinction between obtaining and non-obtaining states of affairs is as controversial as the Meinongian distinction between existent and non-existent particulars. Stipulating that non-obtaining states of affairs merely differ from facts by not obtaining is as uninformative as stipulating that non-existent differ from existent particulars merely by not existing. This suggests that the distinction between facts and non-obtaining states of affairs, like the distinction between what exists and what there is, is a distinction without a difference.

⁸ There is a residual problem with this solution since, even if it is granted that non-actual possibilia exist, there is reason to suppose that Pegasus is not among them, since there are many possible flying horses which are all equally deserving the name 'Pegasus'. See Kripke (1980, 157-8) for this point. Similarly, if there are multiple possible flying horses equally deserving of being identified as the subject of Pegasus' portrait, then Pegasus' portrait seems not to depict any of them uniquely and at best depicts the general state of affairs of a winged horse's flying.

⁹ See Walton (1971, 246) for this point.

How to distinguish between facts and non-obtaining states of affairs is a substantive question, which it is the job of an adequate theory of states of affairs to answer. Nevertheless, the distinction between facts and non-obtaining but existent states of affairs is easier to draw than the distinction between what exists and what there is. The reason is that in the case of Meinongian objects there is a *prima facie* equivalence between objects that there are and objects that exist. In the case of states of affairs, however, there is no *prima facie* equivalence between states of affairs existing and obtaining. So there is some reason to expect that the distinction between existent and non-existent objects cannot be drawn, whereas a distinction between obtaining and non-obtaining states of affairs can be.¹⁰

VI

I have considered four proposals for resolving the problems of depictive intentionality: analysing depiction in terms of experience, denying that depiction is a relation, postulating non-existent objects and analysing depiction as a relation between states of affairs. I believe that the final proposal – analysing depiction as a relation between states of affairs – provides a solution to the problem which is compatible with the platitude that depiction is mediated by resemblance and which also forms part of the most plausible solution to the problem of intentionality in general. But the other proposals also have their advantages. Even so, it seems likely that even if one of the other solutions to the problem of intentionality turns out to be more plausible, that solution will also be compatible with the platitude that depiction is mediated by resemblance.

The most striking moral of this discussion is not the merits of any particular proposal, but the similarity in the shape of the issues with other areas in which the problem of intentionality arises: the various options for resolving the problem of the depiction of

¹⁰ The appropriateness of sentences such as ‘there are horses which do not exist’ may be taken to demonstrate a *prima facie* distinction between what there is and what exists. However, it may be argued that ‘there are horses which do not exist’ is a loose way of saying that there are possible horses which do not actually exist, just as ‘there is no beer’ is a loose way of saying that there is no beer in the fridge.

non-existents, for example, are the same as the various options which are available for resolving the problem of intentional inexistence in general. The distinctive role of resemblance in depictive representation adds some extra subtleties to the dialectic, but on closer examination the same problems can usually be raised for other kinds of representation. I conclude that the intentionality of depictive representation poses no specific difficulties either for the platitude that depiction is mediated by resemblance or those theories of depictive representation which are built upon it.

I want to conclude by emphasising that however the general problem of intentionality should be resolved – whether it be by postulating Meinongian objects, denying that representation is relational, analysing representation in terms of experience or, as I have suggested, by analysing representation as a relation towards states of affairs – the problem in the specific case of depiction should not be resolved by denying the platitude that depiction is mediated by resemblance. The reason is that because the platitude that depiction is mediated by resemblance is the only element of the problem which is specific to depictive representation, denying that platitude is the option which is least able to provide a solution to the problem of intentionality in general.

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