

# Resemblance and Representation

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# Declaration

I certify that the substance of this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not currently being submitted for any other degree.

I certify that to the best of my knowledge any help received in preparing this thesis, and all sources used, have been acknowledged.

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# Acknowledgements

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# Abstract

It is a platitude that whereas names are connected to what they represent by arbitrary conventions, depictions are connected to what they represent by resemblance. But reflection on the fact that depiction is representational tends to undermine this platitude. Nevertheless, this thesis defends the platitude that depiction is mediated by resemblance by drawing a strong analogy between depictive and linguistic representation. I also argue that mental representation is prior to both depictive and linguistic representation.

Nelson Goodman has argued forcefully that the platitude that depiction is mediated by resemblance is false, on the grounds that resemblance is either insufficient for or incidental to depictive representation. In Chapter 2, I defend common sense from Goodman's attack by using Paul Grice's analysis of meaning to specify the non-incidental role of resemblance in depictive representation. Chapter 3 responds to objections purporting to establish a disanalogy between depiction and Grice's analysis of speaker meaning.

Instead of defining depiction in terms of resemblance, Goodman argued that depiction should be defined in terms of the syntactic and semantic properties of symbol systems. In Chapter 4, I argue that neither Goodman's definition nor definitions in the same style due to John Kulvicki and Kent Bach are successful. At the end of Chapter 4 and in Chapter 6, I use a distinction between symbol systems in the abstract and symbol systems in use to argue that no definition of depiction in terms of the syntactic and semantic properties of symbol systems can succeed.

Goodman attempts to undermine the platitude that depiction is mediated by resemblance by defining both depictive and linguistic representation as kinds of symbol system. In Chapter 5 I use an analogy with David Lewis' analysis of conventional language to argue that Goodman is right to draw a strong analogy between the two kinds of representation, but wrong to draw the counterintuitive conclusion that depiction is not

mediated by resemblance. In Chapter 6, I extend the analogy to argue that depiction is not mediated by convention and cannot be defined as a kind of symbol system.

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. In Chapter 7, I first argue that these problems are really a manifestation of the more general problem of intentionality. I then show how analysing depiction in terms of states of affairs provides a plausible solution to the problem of depictive intentionality which supports rather than undermines the platitude that depiction is mediated by resemblance.

In Chapter 8, I argue for the application of possible world semantics to the analysis of the contents of depiction. I argue that the phenomena of depiction in perspective requires an analysis in terms of centred possible worlds and properties and that the phenomena of depiction of inconsistency requires an analysis in terms of more fine grained entities which are still closely related to possible worlds. In Chapter 9, I conclude by discussing the consequences of the analysis of depiction I provide for important issues in the philosophy of language, the philosophy of mind and the philosophy of art.

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# Epigram

Once when I was six I saw a magnificent picture in a book called *True Stories of the Virgin Forest*. It showed a boa constrictor swallowing a wild beast. Here is a copy of the drawing:



In the book it said: “Boa constrictors swallow their prey whole, without chewing. Afterwards they are unable to move, and they digest by going to sleep for six months.”

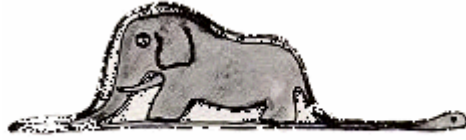
This made me think a lot about the adventures of the jungle and, eventually, I succeeded with a coloured pencil in making my first drawing. My Drawing Number One. It looked like this:



I showed my masterpiece to the grown-ups, and asked if my drawing frightened them.

“Why would a hat frighten anyone?” they answered.

My drawing was not of a hat. It was of a boa constrictor digesting an elephant. So then I drew the inside of the boa constrictor, for the benefit of the grown-ups. (Grown-ups always need explanations.) My Drawing Number Two looked like this:



The grown ups now advised me to give up drawing boa constrictors altogether, from the inside or the outside, and devote myself instead to geography, history, arithmetic and grammar. So it was that, at the age of six, I gave up a wonderful career as a painter. I had been discouraged by the failure of my Drawing Number One and my Drawing Number Two. Grown-ups never understand anything by themselves, and it is exhausting for children always and forever to be giving explanations.

- Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *The Little Prince* (1943, 5-6).

# 1 Introduction

It is a platitude – something only a philosopher would dream of denying – 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 and I are connected by my portrait’s resemblance to me, my name and I are connected merely by an arbitrary convention. The first aim of this thesis is the defence of the platitude that depiction is mediated by resemblance.<sup>1</sup>

Reflection on the fact that depiction is a kind of representation tends to undermine the platitude that depiction is mediated by resemblance, because it emphasises the similarities rather than the differences between depiction and language, which in turn tends to suggest that depiction is mediated by convention rather than by resemblance. So it is natural to combine the thesis that depiction is mediated by resemblance with the thesis that depiction is a kind of natural representation. Nonetheless, the second aim of this thesis is to argue that depictive representation is non-natural and language-like: depiction and description are closely analogous kinds of representation.<sup>2</sup>

I will argue that the combination of these two theses – that depiction is mediated by resemblance and that depiction is a non-natural language-like kind of representation –

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<sup>1</sup> For defence of theories of depiction in terms of resemblance see, for example, Abell (2005; forthcoming), Budd (1993), Currie (1995, 79-88), Hopkins (1998; 2005), Hyman (2006, 59-112), Malinas (1991), Manns (1971), Neander (1987), Newall (2003), Novitz (1971; 1977), Peacocke (1987), Sachs-Hombach (2003) and Sartwell (1991).

<sup>2</sup> For theories of depiction emphasising the analogy between depiction and language see especially Goodman (1968) and, for example, Bach (1970), Bennett (1971), Gombrich (1960), Kulvicki (2006), Novitz (1977), Ross (1997) and Scholz (2000).

provides a complete theory of depictive representation which combines the virtues of common sense with the insights of its detractors. The theory meets all the major objections to the thesis that depiction is mediated by resemblance, has all the advantages of the thesis that depiction is language-like and resolves many of the questions in philosophy of language, mind and art whose answer depends upon the nature of depiction.

This chapter introduces the problem, the resources with which to solve the problem, and the reasons for being interested in the problem. Sections 1.1 to 1.3 introduce depiction, resemblance and representation respectively. Section 1.4 motivates investigating depiction by discussing applications in the philosophy of mind, the philosophy of language, the philosophy of art and ethics. Section 1.5 introduces and defends the method of analysis. In following chapters I provide a theory of depiction which resolves the problems for the platitude that depiction is mediated by resemblance raised in this chapter by defending an extremely close analogy between depictive and linguistic representation.

## 1.1 Depiction

Depiction is a distinctive kind of representation. Portraits, landscapes, photographs, maps, sketches, stick figures and sculptures are all examples of depiction. Names, sentences, non-figurative paintings, clocks, musical scores and time tables are all examples of representations which are not depictions. Rocks, tables, planets and other insignificant items are examples which are neither depictions nor representations, although some may be degenerate examples of natural representation. This section will introduce the topic of depiction by clarifying this ostensive definition; following sections will introduce resemblance and representation, in terms of which I will argue depiction may be defined.

Three clarifications. First, although figurative pictures are the paradigm examples of depiction, taking depiction as a kind of representation means that not all pictures belong

to the category of depiction. Although figurative and non-figurative paintings, for example, have much in common, non-figurative paintings are not counterexamples to the thesis that depiction is mediated by resemblance, because figurative and non-figurative paintings intuitively don't belong to the same kind of representation. Figurative and non-figurative paintings are similar because they are flat surfaces marked with paint, not because they represent in the same way.<sup>3</sup>

Second, just as not all pictures are depictions, not all depictions are pictures. So although sculptures, for example, are not flat surfaces marked with lines or colour, this does not disqualify sculptures from being depictions, since it is plausible that sculptures and figurative pictures represent in the same way. It follows that depictive representation cuts across many different media: although most music, for example, is neither depictive nor representational, program music is an important exception. Similarly, most dance is not representational, but it seems plausible that mimes are depictions in the medium of dance.<sup>4</sup> So although I will focus on pictures for most of the thesis, bear in mind that they are merely the paradigm cases of a more general kind of representation.

This point is methodologically important. John Hyman, for example, begins a very different inquiry when he writes “Is an apple red because of the visual sensation it produces in us when we see it, or does it produce this sensation in us because it is red? All pictures – whatever kind of substance they are made of – consist of colour distributed on a plane. So this is the right way for a study of depiction to begin.” (Hyman, 2006, 7). If the subject of inquiry is a kind of representation, rather than a representational medium, the right starting place for a study of depiction is not to inquire into the nature of perception and colour, but rather to inquire into the nature of representation in general.

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<sup>3</sup> This is a point agreed upon even by those who, like Goodman, argue that resemblance is not the distinguishing feature of depiction. See, for example, Lopes (1996, 5-6).

<sup>4</sup> For interesting discussion of whether depiction is essentially visual in nature see Hopkins (2000; 2003a), Lopes (1997) and Wollheim (2003a).

Third, while depictive and descriptive representation are distinct kinds, I allow that they may overlap. Take, for example, a picture of a signboard which reads ‘danger’. The picture both represents a signboard and represents danger. But whereas the signboard is represented depictively, danger is represented merely descriptively, since it is represented by the appearance of the word ‘danger’ within the picture. Similarly the Soviet flag represents a hammer and sickle as well as representing the Soviet Union: the hammer and sickle are represented depictively, but the representation of the Soviet Union is arguably merely conventional.<sup>5</sup>

Allegorical representation is the reverse of this pattern. The representation of the fiction is paradigmatically descriptive, since it is written in conventional language, but the events of the fiction also represent a real situation. While the representation of the fiction is descriptive, the representation of the real situation is depictive, and plausibly mediated by resemblance. *Animal Farm*, for example, describes in language the takeover of a farm by pigs. The events described in turn depict the Russian Revolution, perhaps in virtue of the resemblance between the events of the story and the events of the revolution. So it’s plausible that allegorical stories belong to the kind of depictive representation.

## 1.2 Resemblance

Resemblance is the relation of sharing properties. So, for example, peas in a pod resemble each other because they each share the properties of greenness, roundness and yuckiness. A picture may resemble what it represents because, for instance, it has the same shape and colour as what it represents. This simple analysis of resemblance underlies the plausibility of defining depiction in terms of resemblance by lending substance to the platitude that depiction is mediated by resemblance, but it also underlies most of the important objections to defining depiction in terms of resemblance.

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<sup>5</sup> See Peacocke (1986, 383).

The naïvest analysis of depiction simply assimilates depiction to resemblance. According to it:

- (1) Something depicts another if and only if the former resembles the latter.

The Mona Lisa, for example, is supposed to depict Lisa simply because the Mona Lisa resembles Lisa. The most formidable objections to the platitude that depiction is mediated by resemblance take the form of objections to the necessity and sufficiency of this first analysis.

The insufficiency of the first analysis is plain from the ubiquity of resemblance in comparison to depictive representation. Members of the same family resemble each other, but do not depict each other; twins resemble each other almost exactly, but still do not depict each other. Automobiles from the same assembly line resemble each other very closely, but rarely represent each other. Most paintings bear a closer resemblance to other paintings than they do to the objects which they represent.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, everything resembles everything in some respect: Socrates and the Eiffel tower resemble each other, for example, because they share the disjunctive property of being either Socrates or the Eiffel tower.

The fact that everything resembles everything in some respect might be taken to show that a theory of depiction in terms of resemblance should specify a single respect in which all and only depictions resemble what they represent. Although, for example, paintings resemble each other more than they resemble what they represent, perhaps there is some specific respect of resemblance in which paintings resemble what they represent more than they resemble each other. Similarly, although members of the same family resemble each other without depicting each other, perhaps this is merely because the respects in which family members resemble each other are not the same as the respects required for depictive representation.

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<sup>6</sup> See Goodman (1968, 4-5) for these examples.

This suggests that an analysis of depiction in terms of resemblance ought to be an analysis of the respect in which depictions resemble what they represent. However, it is unlikely that there is any relevant respect in which all depictions resemble what they represent.<sup>7</sup> For some depictions colour may be important, for others only shape may be relevant, whereas there may be others still for which texture is the overriding consideration. If depiction is construed broadly, as I believe it should be, so as to include sculpture, program music, sound recording, mime and even allegory, then the project of singling out a single respect of resemblance in which all depictions resemble what they represent is even more infeasible.

However, the quixotic search for a specification of a single respect in which all depictions resemble what they represent is superfluous to a defence of the platitude that depiction is mediated by resemblance, since even if such a specification could be provided, it would still not supply sufficient conditions for depictive representation. Since there are counterexamples to the sufficiency of resemblance for depiction which are also counterexamples to the sufficiency of resemblance in any specific respect for depiction, the moral of the insufficiency of resemblance for depiction is not that depiction should be analysed in terms of some specific respect of resemblance, but something else.

To see this point consider the following two counterexamples, which rely on the reflexivity and symmetry of resemblance. First, Aristotle resembles himself, but Aristotle does not depict himself. Furthermore, since all things share all of their properties with themselves, it follows from the definition of resemblance as sharing properties that resemblance is a reflexive relation: everything resembles itself. In contrast, depiction is not a reflexive relation: not everything depicts itself. So the

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<sup>7</sup> See Goodman (1968, 6-20) and especially Lopes (1996, 25-32) for arguments to this effect. See also Budd (1993), Hopkins (1998, 50-70), Hyman (2006, 73-112), Neander (1987), Newall (2006), Novitz (1977), Peacocke (1987) and Sartwell (1991).



insufficiency of resemblance for depiction, and of the first analysis, follows merely from the fact that resemblance is reflexive whereas depiction is not (Goodman, 1968, 4).

Just as resemblance is reflexive, so is resemblance in specific respects. Resemblance in respect of colour, for example, is reflexive, because everything is the same colour as itself. In general, everything shares its own properties with itself, so everything resembles itself in respect of any property or kind of property. So just as resemblance is insufficient for depictive representation, there is also no specific respect of resemblance which is sufficient for depictive representation: even if there were a relevant respect in which all depictions resembled what they represent, resemblance in that respect would not provide a sufficient condition for depiction.

Second, just as the Duke of Wellington's portrait resembles the Duke, the Duke resembles his portrait. But while the portrait depicts the Duke, the Duke does not depict the portrait. Since whenever one thing shares a property with a second, the second shares that same property with the first, resemblance is symmetric: whenever one thing resembles a second, the second resembles the first. In contrast, depiction is not a symmetric relation: not all things depict the things which depict them. So the insufficiency of resemblance for depiction follows merely from the fact that resemblance is symmetric whereas depiction is not (Goodman, 1968, 4).

Just as resemblance is symmetric, so is resemblance in a specific respect. Resemblance in respect of being green, for example, is symmetric, since if one pea shares the property of being green with another pea, then the second pea must also share the property of being green with the first. In general, whenever something shares properties with another, the latter shares those same properties with the former, so whenever something resembles another in some respect, the latter resembles the former in that same respect. It follows that specifying a particular respect in which depictions resemble what they represent cannot exclude examples of insufficiency arising from the symmetry of resemblance.

The reason that the simple analysis of depiction in terms of resemblance is insufficient is not that it fails to specify a relevant respect in which all depictions resemble what they represent, but rather that it fails to accommodate the fact that depiction is a kind of representation. The same point is made by Nelson Goodman in *Languages of Art*. Goodman writes that: “The plain fact is that a picture, to represent an object, must be a symbol for it, stand for it, refer to it; and that no degree of resemblance is sufficient to establish the requisite relationship of reference.” (Goodman, 1968, 5). An adequate analysis of depiction in terms of resemblance should combine resemblance with representation.

But effecting the combination of resemblance with representation is not straightforward. The simplest way to effect the combination is simply to conjoin resemblance with representation, which leads to the following analysis:

- (2) Something depicts another if and only if the former resembles *and represents* the latter.

This second analysis accommodates the point that depiction is a kind of representation straightforwardly since, according to it, the Mona Lisa, for example, depicts Lisa not merely because the Mona Lisa resembles Lisa, but also because the Mona Lisa is a representation of Lisa.

The second analysis also accommodates all the counterexamples to the sufficiency of the first. Members of the same family and cars off an assembly line do not depict each other, since although they resemble each other, they do not represent each other. Paintings resemble each other more than what they represent, but they still do not depict each other unless they represent each other. Aristotle does not depict himself, since he does not represent himself. And although the Duke of Wellington resembles his portrait as much as it resembles him, the Duke does not depict his portrait, since only the portrait represents the Duke, and not vice versa.

Nevertheless, there are further counterexamples to the sufficiency of the second analysis which show that it does not overcome the problems of the first. The phrase ‘this phrase’,

for example, both represents and resembles itself, so the analysis predicts that it depicts itself. Furthermore, since resemblance is reflexive, the phrase ‘this phrase’ resembles itself in every respect. Nevertheless, ‘this phrase’ is obviously not a depiction of itself, since the fact that it resembles itself is merely incidental to the fact that it represents itself. It follows that simply conjoining resemblance and representation cannot escape the basic problem posed by the insufficiency of resemblance for depictive representation.<sup>8</sup>

A simple way to attain sufficiency would be to stipulate that the resemblance of the symbol to what it represents is not incidental to how it represents. Take, for example, the following analysis:

- (3) Something depicts another if and only if the former represents the latter *in virtue of* the former resembling the latter.

Since ‘this phrase’ does not represent itself in virtue of resembling itself, this version of the analysis escapes the insufficiency of the second analysis by guaranteeing a non-incidental connection between resemblance and representation.<sup>9</sup>

But although this analysis is both necessary and sufficient, it is not an informative response to the objection. The objection, supported by examples such as ‘this phrase’, suggests that resemblance is generally incidental to the way that symbols represent what they do. By defining depictions as that kind of representation in which resemblance plays a non-incidental role, this version of the analysis states that there is a non-incidental role for resemblance in depictive representation, but it doesn’t indicate what that role is. An adequately informative analysis, in contrast, would specify what the non-incidental role of resemblance in depictive representation is as well as stating that it has one.

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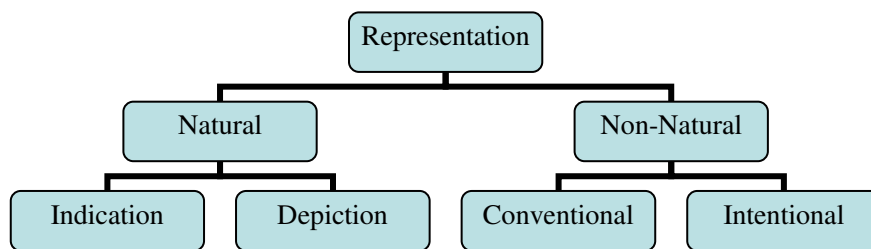
<sup>8</sup> Similar points are made by Schier (1986, 4) and Wolterstorff (1980, 297).

<sup>9</sup> Klaus Sachs-Hombach (2003, 171) advances an analysis in this spirit.

So in order to resolve the problem of the insufficiency of resemblance for depiction, an adequate analysis of depiction must specify a non-incidental connection between representation and resemblance in depictive representation. Simply conjoining resemblance and representation is ineffective, so such a specification requires a more detailed analysis of how depiction is representational. I will address this problem in Chapter 2, where I will argue that depiction can be successfully analysed by combining resemblance with Grice's (1957; 1969) analysis of speaker meaning: according to my analysis, resemblance is the basis upon which the audience infers the communicative intentions of the depiction's perpetrator.

### 1.3 Representation

Though it is uncontroversial that depiction is a kind of representation, it is controversial which kind of representation it is. The broadest division between kinds of representation is between natural and non-natural representation. Non-natural representation can be further divided into intentional and conventional representation. Intuitively, natural representation also divides into depiction and indication, so that depiction is a kind of natural representation. But I will argue that intuition is misleading on this point, and that depiction is not really a kind of natural representation. The following sections explain the elements of this intuitive taxonomy and considers their relevance to defining depictive representation.<sup>10</sup>



Intuitive Taxonomy of Representation

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<sup>10</sup> See Black (1972) for a useful discussion of depiction in relation to these kinds of representation.

The platitude that depiction is mediated by resemblance naturally suggests the initially plausible thesis that depiction is a kind of natural representation. The following passage, for example, neatly exemplifies the intuitive connection that many feel between the two theses: “As opposed to conventional symbols there are the so-called *natural* symbols, in which there is some non-conventional or natural relation (usually either of resemblance or causal connection) between the symbol and the thing symbolized.” (Hospers, 1946, 30). I will argue in the following chapters for severing the connection between these two theses: the platitude that depiction is mediated by resemblance should be retained, but the thesis that depiction is a kind of natural representation should be abandoned.

### 1.3.1 Indication

The paradigm – and perhaps the only – example of natural representation is indication. Whereas depiction is mediated by resemblance and language by convention, indication is mediated by causation. Smoke is a natural representation of fire, for example, because smoke is caused by fire. Similarly, clouds naturally represent rain because rain is caused by clouds. The number of rings in a tree’s trunk is an indication of the age of the tree because the number of rings causally depends on the age of the tree. Since nearly everything causes or is caused by something, indication is the most prolific kind of representation; nearly everything is an indication of something.

The obvious way to develop the thesis that depiction is a kind of natural representation is to argue that just as indication is merely a matter of causal dependence, depiction is merely a matter of resemblance. This would suggest the first analysis, which holds that something depicts another if and only if the former resembles the latter. But since the first analysis could not provide conditions sufficient for representation, this suggests that depiction cannot be analysed as a kind of natural representation in analogy with indication, unless the implausible consequence that just as everything resembles everything, everything depicts everything is accepted.

Though depiction in general is not a kind of indication or natural representation, an important kind of depiction, photography, plausibly is. Since photographs causally depend on what they represent, photographs are indicators of what they represent. This suggests that depiction must be analysed at least partially in terms of indication or causation: just as resemblance must be combined with non-natural representation in order to accomplish the analysis of non-photographic depiction, resemblance must be combined with indication or causation in order to accomplish the analysis of photographic depiction. Despite this, I will argue in Sections 3.3 and 3.4 that photographs are only depictions insofar as they represent non-naturally.

### 1.3.2 Convention

Natural representation – whether mediated by causation or resemblance – is often placed in opposition with conventional representation, so that denials that depiction is a kind of natural representation are often closely followed by assertions that, like language, depiction is a kind of conventional representation. I will argue that this step is too quick: it overlooks the fact that not all non-natural representation is mediated by convention. Nevertheless, I will also argue in Chapter 5 that there is a close analogy between a certain kind of depiction – depictions belonging to depictive symbol systems – and conventional language, since both are partially mediated by the intentions and beliefs of the populations that use them.

The hallmark of conventional representation is its arbitrariness: proper names are conventional, for example, since it is a matter of indifference what name a person has, as long as the name is used by everybody to refer to the same person. I will argue in Section 6.2 that this requirement of arbitrariness is not met by most depictions: depictive symbol systems are not chosen arbitrarily like languages, but because of the convenience provided by the resemblance of the characters of those systems to what they represent. But despite this disanalogy, I will argue that most of the insights behind the thesis that depiction is a kind of conventional representation can still be accommodated by an analysis of depiction in terms of resemblance.

### 1.3.3 Intention

The fact that linguistic expressions may be used non-literally, with meanings which differ from those attached to them by convention, attests that conventional representation is not the only kind of non-natural representation. If, for example, I said, pointing into the sky, ‘That aeroplane is a kilometre long’, then I would typically only mean that it was much longer than the usual plane, although the conventional meaning of the sentence is that the plane is a whole kilometre in length. This type of representation depends not on convention, but on the specific intentions and purposes of the representation’s perpetrator.

I will argue that depiction is neither a kind of natural representation nor a kind of conventional representation, but a kind of non-natural intentional representation: depictions are representations in virtue of the communicative intentions of their perpetrators. I will begin the argument in the next chapter by introducing Paul Grice’s analysis of meaning in terms of intention and discussing how that analysis may be adapted to provide an analysis of depiction. I will argue that combining resemblance with Grice’s analysis of meaning supports both the thesis that depiction is a non-natural language-like kind of representation and the platitude that depiction is mediated by resemblance.

## 1.4 Motivation

The debate over whether depiction is mediated by resemblance often gives the impression of being a mere subsection of the philosophy of art, when it is in fact also a central problem in the philosophy of mind and language. One of the most important issues in contemporary philosophy is over the relative priority of thought and language, and the resolution of these debates is dependent in many places on the possession of a theory of depictive representation. In this section, I want to motivate discussion of depiction by introducing some important connections with issues in philosophy of mind,

language, art and even ethics that an adequate theory of depiction might be expected to address.

The importance of these connections should not overshadow the intrinsic interest of depiction. Interesting issues in philosophy arise whenever reflection leads to doubts about common sense: the problem of perception, for example, is interesting because reflection on illusions and inverted spectra leads us to doubt the common sense position that perception is direct and unmediated. Depiction is interesting for the analogous reason that reflection leads us to doubt the common sense position that depiction is mediated by resemblance. Further theorising affirms that depiction is mediated by resemblance, but it also deepens our understanding of what we previously took for granted.

Over and above the issue concerning resemblance, explaining how depictions represent is important because doing so is a way to extend the philosophy of language to a general semiotic theory. Most successful theories of representation are theories of linguistic representation, but it is obvious that representation is a more general category which also includes pictures, film, television and possibly more. Focusing on the case of depiction provides a way to sort those parts of the philosophy of language that apply to representation generally from those parts which are specific to language, and thus provides the beginnings of a general theory of representation.

#### 1.4.1 Philosophy of Mind

A central problem in contemporary philosophy of mind is the explanation of intentionality or of how thoughts, words and images come to be about other things. This explanation usually takes the form of a reductive analysis of intentionality in non-intentional, usually physical or other naturalistic, terms. This analysis breaks into multiple smaller stages: for example, linguistic intentionality is first analysed in terms of mental intentionality, which in turn is analysed in purely physical terms, or else mental



intentionality is analysed in terms of linguistic intentionality, and linguistic intentionality is in turn analysed in terms of the purely physical.<sup>11</sup>

Images or depictions occur in various places in such analyses, but often in ways that are misunderstood. First, mental representation is often analysed as a kind of relation which holds towards what is represented. If, for example, I believe that it's raining, then I bear a certain relation to the proposition that it's raining. Resemblance provides one intuitive account of that relation, and is the main competitor of an account in terms of indication or causation. The idea that resemblance mediates mental representation is obviously suggested by the role of resemblance in mediating depictive representation, but a full account of depictive representation is required before this analogy can be assessed.<sup>12</sup>

Second, it is sometimes hypothesized that the structure of mental representation is depictive rather than descriptive.<sup>13</sup> This issue arises in evaluating the hypothesis that there is a language of thought. One consideration supporting the language of thought hypothesis is the claim that the language of thought is the best explanation of the mind's systematicity and productivity. The possibility that the mind's structure may be depictive arises as a counterexample to this claim: the hypothesis that the mind's

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<sup>11</sup> Field (1978), for example, defends analysing mental in terms of linguistic intentionality and linguistic intentionality in terms of indication, whereas Stalnaker (1984) argues for analysing linguistic in terms of mental intentionality and mental intentionality in terms of indication.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, Dretske (1981) and Stalnaker (1984) for analyses of mental representation in terms of indication. See Fodor (1984, 233) for a brief comparison of analyses in terms of resemblance and indication.

<sup>13</sup> See, for example, Braddon-Mitchell and Jackson (1996) and Lewis (1994), who propose that the structure of thought is map-like. See Casati and Varzi (1999) for a semantics of maps which suggests that map-like representation is more language-like than generally supposed. See Fodor (1975; 1987) for the thesis that mental structure is language-like.

structure is depictive is supposed to provide at least as good an explanation of its systematicity and productivity as the language of thought hypothesis. But until that possibility is properly understood, it isn't possible to tell whether it's a genuine alternative to the language of thought.

Third, it is often argued from the possibility of illusion and hallucination that experiences cannot be directly related to what they are of, but are so related only via mental intermediaries. One explication of what these mental intermediaries are is that they are inner pictures of what is experienced, which represent truly in the case of veridical perception but falsely in the cases of hallucination and illusion. But attention to the nature of depiction for its own sake shows that this explication cannot be the whole story, since, as I argue in Chapter 7, accounting for depictions of non-existents and depictive misrepresentation encounters the exact same difficulty as accounting for illusion and hallucination.

Finally, there is an important debate in cognitive science about the existence of mental images. But much of this debate cannot be resolved, not because of lack of empirical data or knowledge of the mind's working, but because the analogy drawn between mental representation and depictive representation is not understood. To resolve the issue of whether there are mental images, and whether hypothesising mental images can explain the data and introspective evidence it is supposed to, a clearer account is required of what depiction is.<sup>14</sup> So a successful resolution of the debate over mental images depends upon the development of a theory of depiction.

The thrust of the thesis on these issues is that depictive representation, like linguistic representation, is derivative of mental representation, which is analysable – if at all – in

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<sup>14</sup> Fodor (1975) relies on the platitude that depiction is mediated by resemblance to argue for a derivative role for mental images in cognition. Block (1983) points out the difficulty of resolving the debate without a theory of depiction. See also Abell and Currie (1999), Block (1982), Ryle (1949) and Tye (1991).

terms of a physical or other natural relation towards propositions. Consequently, the hypotheses that beliefs are related to propositions via resemblance, that the structure of mental representation is depictive, that perception is mediated by inner pictures, and that mental imagery is a kind of inner picturing, are difficult to maintain. So the appeal to depictive representation as a tool for providing a reduction of mental representation turns out to rest on an overly naïve account of depiction.<sup>15</sup>

#### 1.4.2 Philosophy of Language

The current consensus, even among those who argue that mental representation is linguistic in structure, is that linguistic intentionality is derivative of mental intentionality, and I will argue that there is a similar dependence of depictive on mental representation. But an earlier view held that depictive representation was fundamental, and that both mental and linguistic representation derive from it. Wittgenstein, for example, wrote that “We picture facts to ourselves” (1921, 2.1), that “A logical picture of facts is a thought” (1921, 3) and that “A proposition is a picture of reality” (1921, 4.01). A full understanding of why this theory fails requires a fuller understanding of depictive representation.

The picture theory of language is now widely rejected, mainly due to the same kind of objections that beset the thesis that depiction is mediated by resemblance. While I will argue that the objections to the thesis that depiction is mediated by resemblance can be avoided by analysing depiction in terms of mental representation, the same defence cannot be mounted to rescue the picture theory of language and thought or intentionality in general, since that defence requires an independent analysis of mental representation to escape circularity. So despite defending the platitude that depiction is mediated by resemblance, I concur in the general rejection of the picture theory of language and intentionality.

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<sup>15</sup> See Lopes (2003) for further connections between depiction and philosophy of mind.

Nevertheless, understanding depiction is still important for understanding language. Philosophers of language are sometimes accused of subsisting on a meagre diet of examples. This accusation is in many respects unfair, but I believe that it is true that the focus of philosophers of language on language in particular is capable of distorting those of their conclusions which are meant to apply to communication in general. John Searle, for example, writes "...the fact that one can perform illocutionary acts while standing outside a natural language, or any other system of constitutive rules, should not obscure the fact that in general illocutionary acts are performed with language in virtue of certain rules, and indeed could not be performed unless language allowed the possibility of their performance." (Searle, 1969, 38).

While Searle is prepared to accept that a few illocutionary acts are possible without the aid of language, he underrates the importance of such examples because he fails to take into consideration the diverse kinds of non-linguistic representation. Once the scope of enquiry is widened to include kinds of representation such as depiction, examples of non-linguistic illocutionary acts are harder to overlook: while it may be difficult, as Searle argues, to make a promise by drawing a picture, it is easily possible to perform illocutionary acts such as to depict, to instruct, to express, to plan, to record, to portray, to caricature and so forth without uttering a word or conforming to a system of constitutive rules.<sup>16</sup>

In the rest of this section, I will discuss two important connections between depiction and two more traditional topics in the philosophy of language: quotation and metaphor. The connections between quotation and depiction and metaphor and depiction are both suggested by Donald Davidson (1978; 1979). The connection between quotation and metaphor is suggested by Davidson when he criticises various theories of quotation on the grounds that according to them nothing is left "...of the intuitively attractive notion

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<sup>16</sup> For a discussion of depiction in relation to illocutionary acts, see especially Novitz (1977) and also Kjørup (1971) and Pateman (1980). For an account accommodating non-linguistic illocutionary acts see Strawson (1964).

that a quotation somehow pictures what it is about.” (1979, 83). The idea is that quotations represent what they do by displaying it, which entails that quotations resemble what they represent.

To his credit, Davidson does not take the hypothesis that quotation is depictive to explain how quotation works, but merely to be a constraint on an adequate explanation. But I doubt that the hypothesis that quotation is depictive is even a constraint on an adequate theory of quotation. Although it is true that quotations resemble what they represent, the resemblance of quotations to themselves, as I argued using the example of ‘this phrase’ in the previous section, is incidental to the fact that quotations represents themselves. Quotation also appears in Chapter 3, as an interesting counterexample to the sufficiency of definitions of depiction in terms of the structural condition of transparency, and Chapter 4, as an illustration of the prima facie incompatibility between defining depiction as a kind of symbol system and the platitude that depiction is mediated by resemblance.

The connection between depiction and metaphor is more elusive. In criticising the idea that metaphors have meaning, other than their literal meaning, Davidson writes: “When we try to say what a metaphor “means”, we soon realise there is no end to what it mentions ...How many facts or propositions are conveyed by a photograph? ...Metaphor makes us see one thing as another...” (1978, 263). Davidson uses an analogy between depictions and metaphors to try to support his claim that the only meaning that metaphors have is their literal meaning.

Whether or not Davidson’s conclusion is right, it isn’t clear whether the analogy with depiction supports it, because it isn’t clear that the premises Davidson draws on concerning pictures are correct. A complete theory of depiction, like the one I will develop in later chapters, is required to evaluate arguments like Davidson’s. If my contention that depictive representation is more closely analogous to linguistic representation than is usually thought is correct, then this suggests that analogies

between depiction and other kinds of representation like those Davidson draws may not support the strong conclusions that they are often claimed to.<sup>17</sup>

### 1.4.3 Philosophy of Art

For obvious reasons, depiction is a central concern in the philosophy of art. But while the visual arts provide many of the most interesting examples of depictions, it should be kept in mind that not all depiction is art: family photos, instructions for assembling furniture, maps, botanical drawings, x-rays and architectural plans are some of many examples of depictions that have little to do with art.<sup>18</sup> To pursue the study of depiction as a subfield of the philosophy of art is like pursuing the philosophy of language as a subfield of the philosophy of literature, and an exclusive focus on the problems of aesthetics leads to distorted theories of depiction, just as an exclusive focus on literary questions would lead to a distorted philosophy of language.

Nevertheless, an adequate theory of depiction should ideally explain, or at least be compatible with an explanation of, the aesthetic pleasures provided by pictures. In this section I will explain just two issues in the aesthetics of pictures that a theory of depiction might be expected to resolve or clarify. The first is the nature of pictorial realism, where it is natural to suggest that a picture is realistic to the degree in which it resembles what it represents in relevant respects. The second is a puzzle about how mere imitations can give more pleasure than the real things they imitate, especially when what is imitated is itself unpleasant.

Resemblance theories of depiction suggest a natural way to explain depictive realism: one picture is more realistic than another if and only if the former has a greater degree of resemblance towards what it represents than the latter, and one style of depiction is more

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<sup>17</sup> See Carrol (1994) and Stern (2000, 281-9) for further connections between metaphor and depiction.

<sup>18</sup> See Lopes (1996, 6-8).

realistic than another if pictures in the first style have a greater degree of resemblance towards what they represent than pictures in the second style. It is plausible that black and white photographs, for example, are less realistic than coloured photographs because coloured photographs resemble what they represent in more respects than black and white photographs do.<sup>19</sup>

One reason for rejecting the account of realism in terms of resemblance is just the rejection of the platitude that depiction is mediated by resemblance. So, for example, after rejecting the thesis that resemblance mediates depiction, Goodman goes on to write: “This leaves unanswered the minor question of what constitutes realism of pictorial representation. Surely not, in view of the foregoing, any sort of resemblance to reality.” (1968, 34). To the extent that rejecting the account of realism in terms of resemblance is a consequence of rejecting the platitude that depiction is mediated by resemblance, defending the platitude that depiction is mediated by resemblance also provides a defence of accounts of realism in terms of resemblance.

The second issue is that despite easily accommodating stylistic realism, resemblance is often argued to be unable to explain the aesthetic interest pictures with realistic subjects hold for us, since imitations of objects are generally inferior to the objects themselves. A depiction of an old pair of boots, for example, may be far more interesting than the boots themselves. Even where both the depiction and what it represents hold aesthetic interest, the nature of our interest in the depiction will differ from the nature of our interest in the object: the value of paintings of flowers, for example, differs significantly from the value of flowers – sometimes by many millions of dollars. This seems puzzling if depiction is mediated by resemblance, since one would expect similarities between depictions and what they represent to be reflected by similarities in their value.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> For discussion of depictive realism see, for example, Abell (2007), Currie (1995, 106-12), Kulvicki (2006, 209-44) and Lopes (1995).

<sup>20</sup> For this problem see especially Schier (1993) and Lopes (2005a, 20-48).

#### 1.4.4 Ethics

While the most obvious controversies concerning depiction belong to the philosophy of mind, art and language, there are also important connections with philosophical theories in more distant fields, such as ethics and the philosophy of science. In this section I want to explore just one of these connections, which is the debate in ethics over the moral status of pornography. Given that pornographic video, rather than pornographic literature, is usually the target of arguments that pornography is wrong, and video is a form of depiction, there is an obvious connection between depiction and arguments against pornography. But there are also less obvious connections with specific arguments concerning why pornography is wrong.

On a standard view pornography is wrong because it is supposed to cause wrong by, for example, perpetuating sexist stereotypes, or perhaps is wrong because it depicts or represents acts which are wrong. A stronger view, defended by Rae Langton (1993), is that pornography is itself a kind of wrong action. In specifically, Langton argues that pornography is the speech act of subjugating woman, and is wrong because subjugating women is wrong. This commits Langton to the view that both pornographic literature and video are kinds of speech act, even though there is not much speech in the latter.<sup>21</sup>

One way to argue against Langton's position is to ignore the part of the claim that says that pornography subjugates women and focus on the part that claims that pornography is a kind of speech act. Jennifer Saul, for example, writes "I argue that it does not make sense to understand works of pornography as speech acts. The reason for this – briefly stated — is that only *utterances in contexts* can be speech acts." (2006, 230).

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<sup>21</sup> See Austin (1962), Schiffer (1972, 88-110), Searle (1969) and Strawson (1964) for the relevant notion of speech acts. See Kjørup (1971), Novitz (1977) and Pateman (1980; 1983) for discussion of speech acts in relation to depictive representation. See Langton and West (1999) for more connections between philosophy of language and pornography.



Pornographic novels may be speech acts but, it is argued, pornographic videos and pictures cannot be, because pornographic videos and pictures are not utterances in contexts.

If the analogy that I draw in the rest of the thesis between depictive and linguistic representation is right, then arguing that pornography is not a speech act is not the right way to try to undermine Langton's view. According to my theory, the only difference between linguistic and depictive modes of representation is the role of resemblance in the latter, and so both pictures and words are equally capable of being used for the performance of illocutionary acts. I will argue in Chapter 2 that depiction should be analysed using Grice's analysis of meaning, which is closely related to Austin's (1962) notion of speech acts (See Strawson (1964) for the connection), so that although depictions are rarely speech, they are speech acts in the sense relevant to the debate over pornography.

## 1.5 Methodology

The main method of the thesis is analysis. I will argue for an analysis of depiction in terms of resemblance and communicative intentions, and argue against some alternative analyses of depiction in other terms. An analysis is a statement of equivalence between the analysandum and the analysans. Take, for example, the following analysis of bachelors: Bachelors are unmarried men. The analysis says what bachelors are by stating that bachelors, the analysandum, are equivalent to unmarried men, the analysans. Similarly, an analysis of depiction will state an equivalence between depiction and, for example, some combination of resemblance and intentions.

An analysis of depiction should not only state an equivalence between depictions and other things, but should state the conditions under which something depicts another. The Mona Lisa, for example, should not merely be classified as a depiction, but as a depiction of Lisa. That suggests that the analysis should be in the form of a biconditional stating that something depicts another if and only if ... , where the ellipsis on the right

hand side is replaced by the analysans. The first analysis, for example, replaced the ellipsis with resemblance to form the statement that something depicts another if and only if the former resembles the latter.

Biconditional analyses should be understood as strict biconditionals, which state necessary equivalences between the analysandum and the analysans, rather than material biconditionals, which merely state a contingent coincidence between analysandum and analysans. The biconditional ‘Snow is white if and only if grass is green’, for example, is not an adequate analysis of snow being white in terms of grass being green, since although ‘Snow is white’ and ‘Grass is green’ are both true, it is not necessary that this is so: it is possible for ‘Snow is white’ to be true when ‘Grass is green’ is false, and vice versa. Analysis requires a necessary coincidence between the analysandum and analysans.

Even a strict biconditional does not always suffice for an illuminating philosophical analysis: it is a simple matter to find strict biconditionals which fail to provide an analysans which illuminates the nature of the analysandum. Take, for example, the analysis: Something depicts another if and only if the former depicts the latter. This analysis obviously states a necessary equivalence between the analysandum and the analysans, since their truth cannot differ. But since the analysandum and the analysans are stated in exactly the same terms, the analysis is trivial and uninformative. The third analysis above displayed a similar defect, since although it was a true strict biconditional, it was insufficiently informative about the connection between depiction and resemblance.

Adequate analyses should not merely state necessary equivalencies between analysandum and analysans, but also illuminate the nature of the analysandum in terms of the analysans. This illumination comes in two kinds, depending on the goals of the analysis: analyses may be either reductive or reciprocal. Reductive analyses require the terms of the analysans to be either metaphysically, epistemologically or conceptually prior to the terms of the analysans, whereas reciprocal analyses are merely required to

illuminate how the analysandum and the analysans are related. The primary goal of this thesis is simply to provide a reciprocal analysis of depiction in terms of resemblance and representation which supports the platitude that depiction is mediated by resemblance.<sup>22</sup>

But a secondary goal of the thesis is to argue that mental representation is metaphysically prior to depictive representation. Substantiating this conclusion requires a metaphysically reductive analysis of depiction in terms of the mental, so it must also be shown that the terms of the analysans – intention and resemblance – are metaphysically prior to the terms of the analysandum – depiction. Since the final analysis will be an application of Grice's analysis of meaning, one of the main applications of which is the metaphysically reductive analysis of the linguistic in terms of the mental, I am confident that this commitment can be discharged and that the analysis will supply a metaphysical reduction of depiction to the mental.

One of the major objections to the analysis of depiction in terms of intention and resemblance is that the analysis cannot be epistemologically reductive, since the terms of the analysandum are not epistemologically prior to the terms of the analysans: the communicative intentions of a depiction's perpetrator are just as likely to be discovered from antecedent knowledge of what the depiction represents as vice versa.<sup>23</sup> I concur that the final analysis is not epistemologically reductive. Nevertheless, the analysis will still discharge its obligation to explain how depiction is understood, since it suggests that the communicative intentions of a depiction's perpetrator may be inferred from what the depiction resembles.

Even informative analyses need not be interesting. It is no doubt possible, for example, to give an informative analysis of bottles in terms of the physical, but the analysis would not be interesting enough to make up for the difficulty of obtaining it. Although, for example, an analysis of bottles in terms of the physical could show that bottles are

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<sup>22</sup> See Avramides (1989) for the distinction between reciprocal and reductive analysis.

<sup>23</sup> For this objection see especially Lopes (1996; 2005b).

physical, this is not interesting because the physical nature of bottles is not something we are inclined to doubt. Obtaining an informative analysis of depiction is an interesting project for the reasons given in the last section: an informative analysis of depiction can resolve doubt about the platitude that depiction is mediated by resemblance as well as resolving further questions in the philosophy of mind, language and art.

Three objections. First, analysis is often misleadingly called conceptual analysis, as if the analysandum is a concept and the analysans are the conditions for the application of that concept. This leads to the idea that the subject of investigation is not depiction, or whatever is being analysed, itself but merely the concept of depiction, or of whatever is being analysed. Given that we might easily have had a different concept of depiction and that it is possible that many of us express different concepts using the word 'depiction', this in turn leads many to the conclusion that providing analyses is merely an exercise in autobiography rather than a kind of scientific investigation.

But analyses, on the face of it, state equivalences between the analysandum and the analysans, rather than conditions for the application of the concept of the analysans. So there is no reason to suppose that our concepts, rather than the analysans themselves, are the subject of investigation. What might be true, and explain the use of the title conceptual analysis, is that our knowledge that an analysis is true may be based on our grasp of the concepts which appear in the analysis. But even if this account of how analyses are known is correct, it need not follow that concepts and not things are the subject of the analyses and so it need not follow that analysis is an uninformative and trivial pursuit.

This thesis will not adopt any particular position on the epistemological status of analysis. The most common position is that analyses are conceptual or analytic truths which are known a priori. Much of the contemporary scepticism about the possibility and usefulness of analysis arises from scepticism about this epistemology: many contemporary philosophers are sympathetic with the view that there are neither analytic nor a priori truths. But philosophical analyses of the kind outlined above are not required

to be a priori, but only necessary. So, unless it is combined with the much less popular doctrine of scepticism about modality, scepticism about a priori knowledge should not lead automatically to scepticism about analysis.

Second, analysis is often criticised on the grounds that it leads to dialectical deadlock, where it becomes impossible to assess rival positions. Robert Hopkins, for example, writes that “Provided that rival views avoid obscurity and obvious failure to cover more than a fraction of picturing [depiction], there is little to help us choose between them. At most they may differ about quite where the boundaries of depiction lie. The debate between them will then reduce to trading intuitions about which peripheral cases do or don’t count as depiction. Experiences of such discussions elsewhere in philosophy suggest that they are rarely productive.” (Hopkins, 1998, 23-4).

It is true that rival analyses disagree on the classification of which examples count as depictions. But this is no different from the disagreement of rival scientific theories over how to interpret the results of particular experiments: one theory may discard as noise something another regards as extremely significant. Just as it is still possible to assess rival scientific theories which disagree over the results of particular experiments by conducting further experiments and appealing to theoretical virtues such as simplicity and explanatory power, rival analyses may still be assessed by appeal both to further examples and, even when only peripheral examples remain, to general theoretical considerations.

The presence of continuing disagreement between proponents of rival analyses even after all examples and theoretical considerations are taken into account may sometimes be an indication of verbal disagreement about what the terms of the analysandum refer to, rather than substantive disagreement about the analysandum’s nature. In cases such as this it may be better to resolve the dispute by accepting both analyses as equally successful accounts of distinct analysandums. Nevertheless, philosophical progress may still be made by assessing the consequences of each analysis for the further questions

that the analyses are required to resolve, so that the method of analysis is able to resolve substantive questions even in the presence of verbal disagreement.

So even if the dispute about whether depiction is mediated by resemblance turns out to be a merely verbal dispute about which kind of representation ‘depiction’ refers to, it does not follow that there are no substantive questions which an analysis of depiction – or one disambiguation of what depictions refers to – in terms of resemblance can resolve. In particular, there is substantive disagreement about the question whether any kind of representation at all is mediated by resemblance: critics and proponents of the platitude that depiction is mediated by resemblance would continue to disagree on this issue even were it discovered that part of their disagreement over depiction is merely verbal.

Third, much scepticism about analysis has arisen from disappointment over past attempts. Most analyses given in philosophy are unsuccessful. There are nearly always counterexamples which show that the truth of the sentences on each side of the biconditional used to give the analysis can differ, so that the two sides are not equivalent. Furthermore, this often proves to be the case regardless of the complexity of an analysis or the number of revisions it has undergone. Given this history, it is very unlikely that an analysis of depiction which is both informative and truly necessary and sufficient will ever be given. If this is the case, then it seems that analysis is a poor choice of method for examining the nature of depiction.

But there are degrees of failure. Some counterexamples, though they tend to damage the succinctness of an analysis, don’t interfere with the ability of an analysis to prove useful in the clarification of the issues it is proposed in order to resolve. It is sometimes pointed out, for example, that colours cannot be analysed in terms of reflectance properties because stained glass windows have their colour due to filtering rather than reflecting light. Nevertheless, this counterexample does not affect the spirit of the analysis, since it is not an obstacle in principle to the project of analysing colours in terms of their effect

on light or, more generally, in terms of whatever physical properties are normally correlated with the presence of colour.

But some counterexamples are able to show, not just that the analysis of a given thing is likely to be cumbersome, but that it is in principle impossible to give an analysis of that thing in the relevant terms. For example, the existence of a possible world which is physically exactly like our own but lacks conscious experience, would be a counterexample to any analysis of consciousness in physical terms, regardless of the complexity of such an analysis. The example shows the inadequacy, not only of some particular analysis of consciousness, but of every analysis of consciousness in physical terms. By doing so, it shows that the analysis of consciousness in terms of the physical is not merely cumbersome, but impossible in principle.

I aim to give an analysis of depiction that is not open to the latter kind of counterexample. In other words, there must be no counterexample which shows that it is in principle impossible to give an analysis that specifies the sense in which depiction is representational and in which resemblance is distinctive of depiction. Similarly, those who deny that depiction is mediated by resemblance don't merely attempt to give examples that show that an analysis in terms of resemblance must be cumbersome, but examples that show that such an analysis is impossible in principle. Though the analysis of depiction I offer in the following chapters is likely to be much simpler than the whole truth, it is close enough to the truth to show how the platitude that depiction is mediated by resemblance could be true.

## 1.6 Conclusion

So, I will defend the platitude that depiction is mediated by resemblance by offering an analysis – in the form of an informative and necessarily true biconditional – of depiction in terms of resemblance – the relation of sharing properties – and intentional – rather than natural or conventional – representation. The analysis I defend will rely on an extremely close analogy between depictive and linguistic representation. The analysis is

motivated by the intrinsic interest of defending the platitude that depiction is mediated by resemblance as well as by applications in the philosophy of mind, the philosophy of language, the philosophy of art and ethics. I begin in the next chapter by showing how depiction can be analysed by combining resemblance with Grice's analysis of meaning.



## 2 Defining Depiction

In this chapter I argue, following Catharine Abell (2005a), for defining depiction by combining resemblance with Grice's (1957) analysis of meaning in terms of communicative intentions.<sup>24</sup> I will argue that the non-incidental role of resemblance in depictive representation is that audiences infer the communicative intentions of perpetrators from what depictions resemble. So the Mona Lisa depicts Lisa, for example, approximately because audiences are successfully intended to infer from the fact that the Mona Lisa resembles Lisa that Leo intended to induce various effects in them by means of recognition of this intention. This analysis overcomes all objections based on the insufficiency of resemblance for representation.

In Section 2.1, I will explain Grice's analysis of meaning and argue for its application to depiction. In Section 2.2, I will discuss whether the application of Grice's analysis motivates an analysis of depiction in terms of an experiential effect such as seeing-in, rather than an analysis in terms of resemblance. In Section 2.3, I show how Grice's analysis of meaning can be combined with resemblance to supply an analysis of depiction which vindicates the platitude that, whereas language is mediated by convention, depiction is mediated by resemblance. In Section 2.4 I compare and contrast my analysis with Abell's (forthcoming) analysis, which also draws on Grice's analysis of meaning. This chapter motivates the analysis; Chapter 3 responds to counterexamples.

### 2.1 Meaning

In this section, I introduce Grice's analysis of meaning and motivate its application to defining depiction. Grice (1957, 217) begins his analysis of meaning by distinguishing

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<sup>24</sup> For discussion of Grice's analysis see, for example, Avramides (1989), Bennett (1976), Black (1973), Davies (1981, 7-26), Harman (1974), Lewis (1969), Schiffer (1972; 1983), Sperber and Wilson (1986), Strawson (1964) and Ziff (1957).

between sentence meaning and speaker meaning. Suppose, for example, I point at a jumbo jet and say ‘That aeroplane is a thousand metres long’. The sentence means that the aeroplane is literally a kilometre long. But that’s not what I mean by my utterance of the sentence. Rather, my utterance on this occasion merely means that the aeroplane is longer than usual. The example shows that the meaning of sentences, called sentence meaning, is distinct from what speakers use those sentences to mean, called speaker meaning.

Grice’s (1957, 217) procedure is to analyse speaker meaning first, and then to use that analysis – in combination with convention or one of its cognates – to give an analysis of sentence meaning. The procedure is justified because of the dependence of meaning on use: since the timeless meaning of sentences depends on what speakers use those sentences to mean on particular occasions, sentence meaning depends on speaker meaning. I will argue in this section that the sense in which depiction is representational should be specified using Grice’s analysis of speaker meaning.

The purpose of linguistic utterance is to achieve various effects in audiences. Indicative sentences, for example, are usually aimed at producing beliefs. Utterances of imperatives, in contrast, are usually aimed at producing action rather than belief: If I mean you to stop by uttering ‘Stop!’, then my purpose is to induce you to stop. In general, the purpose of a linguistic utterance is to produce an effect in the audience. This suggests that a person means something by an utterance if and only if the person intends to produce an effect, such as a belief or an action, in an audience (Grice, 1957, 217).

But the following is a counterexample. Suppose that I want to frame you for murder. In order to do so I leave your handkerchief stained in blood near the corpse of a person I have murdered. I intend to induce the police to believe, upon finding the bloodstained handkerchief, that you are the murderer, so the conditions of the analysis are met. Nevertheless, it is not the case that I mean by leaving your handkerchief that you are the murderer. I intend an effect in my audience, but I do not mean anything (Grice, 1957, 217).

The problem the example raises is that for something to have meaning it is not sufficient that it be used for some purpose, even if the purpose is characteristically linguistic, because it will usually be possible to achieve that purpose in some other non-meaningful way. The example shows that an adequate analysis of meaning has to characterize not only the effects, such as inducing belief or action, that meaningful utterances are used to accomplish, but must also characterize the distinctive way in which meaningful communication achieves those effects.

In response, Grice (1957, 218) suggests that meaning something characteristically involves making one's purposes explicit in a way that other actions do not: telling someone something, for example, is explicit in a way that tricking someone is not. To encapsulate this, Grice proposes (1957, 220) the following analysis:

- (4) A person means something by an utterance if and only if the person intends the utterance to produce an effect in an audience by means of recognition of this intention.<sup>25</sup>

So, for example, I mean that it's raining by uttering 'It's raining' because I intend my utterance to get you to believe that it's raining by means of recognition of my intention.

Grice's analysis captures the special way an effect must be produced in an audience in order for its production to count as communication. I am not counted as meaning anything by the handkerchief, for example, because although in that example I leave the bloodstained handkerchief with the intention to induce the police to believe that you are the murderer, I don't intend them to arrive at that belief by means of recognition of my intention. In the example of trickery, my intentions are hidden rather than explicit.

Depiction is, like language, aimed at the production of various effects. Maps are depictions aimed at producing beliefs in audiences about the terrain. Lego instructions

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<sup>25</sup> This seems to involve a reflexive paradox, but it does not really do so. See Harman (1974; 2006) for defence of the use of reflexive intentions in the analysis of meaning.

are depictions which are intended to instruct audiences to arrange Lego in a certain way, rather than to get audiences to believe that the Lego is arranged in that way. Caricatures, like jokes, are aimed at producing laughter. Since these effects are the purposes of depiction, they provide the basis for an analysis of depiction in terms of use.<sup>26</sup>

It would be a problematic disanalogy with meaning if there were any depiction which did not have the purpose of producing an effect in its audience. The fact that the purposes of some depictions are exclusively aesthetic, rather than directed to a practical end such as belief or action, might be thought to show this. But, firstly, this is not a disanalogy since there are examples of linguistic meaning, such as in poetry or song, which are also exclusively aesthetic and, secondly, even a depiction with an exclusively aesthetic purpose is at least intended to produce some aesthetic experience, such as pleasure or amusement, concerning what it represents in its audience.

An example analogous to Grice's example of the handkerchief shows that depictive, like linguistic, representation requires the production of these effects to be accomplished explicitly and openly. Suppose that I have a secret tunnel in my office. One panel of the wall is actually the door to the secret tunnel, which I have disguised to look exactly like an ordinary part of the wall. Hence, the tunnel door is intended to look like and resemble an ordinary part of the wall. But the tunnel door is not a depiction of an ordinary part of the wall, since it fails even to represent an ordinary part of the wall.

The example shows that in order to be representational, a painting must not only be used for characteristically representational purposes such as inducing beliefs, but must be so-used in a characteristically representational way. The example also supports the same solution as Grice provides in the linguistic case: my intentions in painting the tunnel door are not suitably explicit to be counted as an instance of meaning by Grice's analysis. So the application of Grice's analysis of meaning to depiction is motivated by

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<sup>26</sup> For related points see Gombrich (1969, 67-8), Kjørup (1971), Lopes (2004), Novitz (1977, 5-10), Wittgenstein (1953, 11) and Wolterstorff (1980, 280-2).

the fact that depictions achieve their purposes in a way which is characteristically open and explicit.

A deeper reason that Grice's analysis of meaning ought to be applied as a specification of the sense in which depiction is representational is its general nature. There is no distinctively linguistic or verbal element in Grice's analysis except for the word "utterance", which Grice (1969, 92) uses in an extended sense to cover any kind of action, including dropping handkerchiefs and drawing pictures as well as producing words. That means that the analysis ought to be expected to apply not just to linguistic meaning but to all kinds of representation, including depiction.

So Grice's analysis should be applied to specifying how depiction is representational. As Abell writes: "... in the case of depiction 'the maker *A*, means picture *Y* to depict an object, *Z*' is roughly equivalent to 'A produced *Y* with the intention of inducing a belief about [or other effect concerning] *Z* in the observers of *Y* in virtue of those observers recognizing this intention.'" (Abell, 2005a, 59). So the Mona Lisa, for example, depicts Lisa because Leo intended to induce an effect – such as the belief that Lisa smiled – in his audience, by means of recognition of that intention.

But exactly how to apply Grice's analysis of meaning to the analysis of depiction is not obvious: simply conjoining resemblance with Grice's analysis is no better than merely conjoining it with representation. The sentence 'This sentence is thirty-five letters long', for example, both resembles itself and may be perpetrated with the intention of inducing in audiences the effect of believing that the sentence is thirty-five letters long by means of recognition of that intention. But, like 'this phrase', the sentence does not depict itself because its resemblance to itself is incidental to its representation of itself. As yet, Grice's analysis has provided no response to the insufficiency of resemblance for representation.

## 2.2 Seeing-In

A common way to specify a particular kind of meaning or representation is by specifying the intended effect in Grice's analysis. Assertions, for example, are those utterances which are intended to produce beliefs by means of recognition of intention, whereas commands are those utterances which are intended, by means of recognition of intention, to produce actions. Similarly, jokes are those utterances which are intended, by means of recognition of intention, to induce amusement. This suggests that specifying a kind of effect appropriate to depiction could be used in combination with Grice's analysis in order to provide an analysis of depiction.

To take a more exotic example, Gregory Currie (1990) has persuasively argued that fiction should be analysed by substituting make-beliefs as the intended effect in Grice's analysis. So, for example, it is fictional in *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* that Sherlock Holmes is a detective because the reader is intended, on the basis of recognition of that intention, to make-believe that Sherlock Holmes is a detective. If there is some effect on the audience that is distinctive of depiction, as make-believe is an effect distinctive of fiction, then that could be combined with Grice's analysis to provide an analysis of depiction.

Richard Wollheim (1980, 205-27) has proposed that there is such an effect in the audience distinctive of depiction, which he calls "seeing-in". Wollheim ostensibly defines seeing-in as the perceptual state one is in when, for example, one makes out a shape in a Rorschach ink-blot test, claims to see a dragon in the clouds or observes a typical figurative picture. Depiction, according to Wollheim, may be defined by combining seeing-in with conditions sufficient for representation, such as intention or causation. Given the foregoing, it makes sense to attempt to analyse depiction by combining Grice's analysis with seeing-in.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Wollheim argues that depiction should be analysed by combining seeing-in with a standard of correctness: Grice's analysis provides one, but not the only, way of specifying the standard of correctness (Abell, 2005a). Seeing-in can in turn be analysed as imagined seeing (Walton, 1992), experienced resemblance (Hopkins, 1998, 36-49) or

So, rather than supporting the platitude that resemblance connects depictions to what they represent, applying Grice's analysis of meaning to depiction might appear to favour an analysis more like the following, which analyses depiction in terms of seeing-in:

- (5) Something depicts another if and only if the former is intended to induce *the latter to be seen-in the former* by means of recognition of this intention.

According to analysis (5), the Mona Lisa, for example, depicts Lisa because Leo intended Lisa to be seen-in the Mona Lisa by means of recognition of this intention.

Analysis (5) appears to provide for a non-incidental connection between representation and a feature distinctive of depiction. The sentence 'This sentence is thirty-five letters long', for example, is ruled out although it resembles itself and represents itself because its intended effect is usually to induce a belief in its audience rather than to induce the audience to see the sentence in itself. So seeing-in appears to avoid resemblance's difficulties by playing a non-incidental role in depictive representation.

But the following counterexample shows that this is not so. Suppose I sincerely write: 'I intend this sentence to be seen-in itself by means of recognition of my intention'. Since I fulfil the conditions of the seeing-in analysis, it predicts that I have not only written that sentence, but also depicted it. But although the sentence is intended to be seen-in itself by means of recognition of my intention, it is not a depiction of itself, since its representation of itself is not depictive but paradigmatically linguistic.

In this case, the fact that the sentence is intended to be seen-in itself is incidental to the fact that the sentence represents itself in the same way that the fact that 'this phrase' resembles itself is incidental to the fact that 'this phrase' represents itself. The problem

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other ways. For discussion of analyses of depiction in terms of seeing-in, see, for example, Budd (1992), Nanay (2004; 2005), Walton (1990, 293-348; 1992), Wollheim (1980; 1987; 2003b) and Wolterstorff (1980, 285-95).

with the analysis seems to be that it specifies the distinctive feature of depiction by specifying what depiction is used to do. But depiction seems to be distinctive, not because it is used to do something special, but because it achieves what it is used to do in a special way.

Four objections. First, perhaps the counterexample can be avoided by denying that things can be seen-in themselves, and thus denying that I can sincerely intend my sentence to be seen-in itself by means of recognition of my intention. But since there are pictures that represent themselves and since proponents of seeing-in must claim that all pictures potentially involve seeing-in, denying that things can be seen-in themselves is not an available response.<sup>28</sup> One might just deny that this particular sentence can be seen in itself, but that would be ad hoc without a principled reason.

Second, perhaps the argument tacitly relies on the premise that nothing can be both a depiction and a verbal representation, which is clearly false. Pattern poems, for example, often represent their subjects both through the conventional meaning of their words and through the arrangement of those words into physical patterns that look like their subject. I don't want to deny that such pattern poems are both descriptions and depictions of their subjects, but perhaps my counterexample requires that I do.<sup>29</sup>

But my argument doesn't rely on the premise that nothing can be both a depiction and a description. I don't

**Pattern-Poem**

This is  
a macrodot-shaped  
poem by which we mean  
not merely a disc or an  
emblematic circle which a  
text so figured might claim  
meant sun moon world eternity  
or perfection No Just a blown  
up dot in lines of 7 up to 29  
letters Past the middle the  
lines of type get shorter  
and move faster but all  
adding up to too much  
fuss about making  
a point.

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<sup>28</sup> See Walton (1990, 117-21) for examples of depictions that depict themselves.

<sup>29</sup> See Hollander (2000, 31) for this and other examples of pattern poems. The example above is both a depiction and a description of itself.



deny that the sentence ‘I intend this sentence to be seen-in itself by means of recognition of my intention’ is a depiction merely because it is a linguistic description, but because both the resemblance of the sentence to itself and the fact that the sentence is intended to be seen-in itself are incidental to its representation of itself: the sentence refers to itself only because of its use of the demonstrative expression ‘this sentence’ to refer to itself.

So the fact that the sentence is a paradigmatically linguistic representation doesn’t exclude the sentence from being a depiction, and the claim that linguistic representations cannot also be depictive representations is not a premise of my argument. The fact that the example is an explicit and paradigmatically linguistic representation plays only a heuristic role: it makes it more obvious than another example would that the sentence’s being intended to be seen-in itself and its resemblance to itself are incidental to the way it represents itself.

The third objection is that the argument proves too much, because it also disproves Currie’s analysis of fiction. Suppose I say ‘I intend you to make-believe that it was a dark and stormy night, by means of recognition of this intention’. It might be argued that, despite meeting the conditions of Currie’s analysis of fiction, this sentence is not fiction because a person sincerely uttering it would be telling the truth: the sentence would be a factually correct account of that person’s intention. Explicitly stating the conditions of Currie’s analysis appears to produce an analogous counterexample to its sufficiency.

But Currie may defend the sufficiency of his analysis by arguing that my utterance of ‘I intend you to make-believe that it is a dark and stormy night by means of recognition of my intention’, as well as accurately reporting my intentions, really does make it fictional that it is a dark and stormy night. The example is not one in which someone meets the conditions of Currie’s analysis without speaking fiction, but is an example in which someone meets the conditions of Currie’s analysis by simultaneously speaking the truth and explicitly creating a fiction.

The plausibility of the response can be appreciated by considering the following example. The first sentence of *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller*, by Italo Calvino, is 'You are about to begin reading Italo Calvino's new novel, *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller*'. Like a sentence that explicitly states the conditions of the analysis of fiction are met, this opening is at once a statement of fact, since normally the reader is about to begin reading the book, and an explicit announcement that the author is engaging in fiction, since it states that you are reading a novel.

The fourth objection is that the argument proves too much because it disproves Grice's analysis of meaning in general. Suppose somebody sincerely says 'I intend you to believe that there is a cat on the mat by means of recognition of this intention'. It follows from Grice's analysis that the person has said that there is a cat on the mat. But intuitively, runs the objection, a sincere utterance of that sentence would be a report about the speaker's intentions rather than the presence of a cat.

But I think that Grice may accept that the speaker means by uttering 'I intend you to believe by means of recognition of my intention that there is a cat on the mat' both that there is a cat on the mat and that the speaker intends the audience to believe by means of recognition of his or her intention that there is a cat on the mat. The response becomes plausible if one considers explicit performatives such as 'I hereby declare that there is a cat on the mat', which is at once a declaration that there is a cat on the mat and a report that the speaker declares that there is a cat on the mat (Schiffer, 1972, 64-8).

The argument I have given applies not only to the seeing-in analysis, but to any analysis of depiction which combines Grice's analysis with a specification of the intended effect. That is because, whatever effect is specified, it will be possible to write a sentence sincerely announcing the intention of the writer to induce the specified effect by means of recognition of that intention. That sentence would meet the conditions of the analysis, but it would fail to be a depiction. So to provide an analysis of depiction, Grice's analysis has to be combined with a feature distinctive of depiction in some other way.

### 2.3 Resemblance

To see how resemblance can be combined with the analysis of meaning in order to provide an analysis of depiction, consider the following pair of examples. First, suppose a shopkeeper antecedently knows that I want cigarettes. I pass the shopkeeper fifty dollars in order to induce him to give me cigarettes, by means of his antecedent recognition of my intention that he give me cigarettes. Second, suppose I pass a shopkeeper eleven dollars and fifty-five cents, which is the exact price of the brand I prefer, intending him to infer from the fact that I pass him that amount that I intend the money to induce him to give me those cigarettes by means of recognition of my intention.<sup>30</sup>

Because in the first case the shopkeeper already knew that I wanted the cigarettes, it does not seem that by passing him the fifty dollars I meant that he should give me the cigarettes. But in the second case, because the shopkeeper inferred what I wanted, it does seem that I meant by the eleven dollars and fifty-five cents that I want the cigarettes. Grice's analysis should be altered as follows to reflect that difference:

- (6) A person means something by an utterance if and only if the person intends that:
  - a. the utterance has a certain feature
  - b. an audience recognise that the utterance has that feature
  - c. the audience infer at least in part from the fact that the utterance has that feature that the person intends:
    - d. that the utterance produce an effect in the audience
    - e. and that that effect be produced at least in part by means of the audience's recognition of intentions (a)-(e).

So, for example, my passing the shopkeeper eleven dollars and fifty-five cents means he should give me cigarettes because it has the feature of being exactly the price of my

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<sup>30</sup> This example is from Grice (1989, 94). See Avramides (1989, 46-7) and Schiffer (1972, 12) for similar examples.

brand of cigarettes, and because the shopkeeper infers from that feature that I intend him to give me the cigarettes by means of recognition of my intention.<sup>31</sup>

In the case of linguistic representation, the feature from which the audience is intended to infer the speaker's intentions is the conventional meaning of the utterance or the fact that speakers have uttered it before with the same meaning. My utterance of 'It's raining', for example, means that it's raining because I intend you to infer from the conventional meaning of 'it's raining' in English that I intend to induce you to believe that it's raining by means of recognition of my intentions (Schiffer, 1972, 12). Convention connects words with what they represent partly by allowing audiences to infer the intentions of speakers who conform to the convention.

As I remarked at the very outset, while most linguistic utterances are connected by convention to what they represent, depictions seem to be connected to what they represent by resemblance. So it is natural to mark this difference by inserting resemblance into the analysis of meaning in the same place that allows for the role of the conventional meanings of words, as follows:

- (7) Something depicts another if and only if it is intended that:
- a. *the former resembles the latter*
  - b. an audience recognise that *the former resembles the latter*
  - c. the audience infer at least in part from the fact that *the former resembles the latter* that it is intended:
  - d. that the former produce an effect in the audience
  - e. and that that effect be produced at least in part by means of the audience's recognition of intentions (a)-(e).

This analysis is the result of specifying that resemblance is the feature of the picture from which audiences infer depictees' intentions, just as conventional meaning is the feature of linguistic utterances from which audiences infer speakers' intentions.

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<sup>31</sup> See Grice (1989, 103) and Avramides (1989, 47) for this version of the analysis. See Harman (1974) for defence of the self-reflexivity in (e).

This analysis avoids the argument that resemblance is not distinctive of depiction because it provides a non-incidental connection between resemblance and representation. ‘This sentence has thirty-five letters’, for example, is not counted as a depiction of itself because, although it resembles and represents itself, the intentions of people who utter it to achieve effects in their audiences by means of recognition of their intentions will normally be inferred not from the sentence’s resemblance to itself, but from its conventional meaning in English.

Unlike for the seeing-in analysis, a counterexample to this analysis cannot be produced by a linguistic restatement of the relevant conditions. Even if I say ‘I intend that this sentence resemble itself, that you recognise this resemblance, and that you infer from this resemblance that I intend you to believe that it’s raining by means of recognition of this intention’ I cannot be sincere because those inferences cannot be made from the sentence’s resemblance to itself and so I cannot (barring the example of idiocy discussed in section 3.2) have the intentions I declare I have using that sentence.

#### 2.4 Abell’s Analysis

This section compares my analysis with a similar analysis of depiction due to Abell (forthcoming). According to Abell’s analysis:

- (8) A marked surface depicts *O* accurately (whether *O* is a particular *a*, or an object of the type *F* that is no particular of that type) if and only if:
  - a. Its maker(s) intended that it resemble *O* in at least one visible respect (or that it would do if *O* existed) and thereby that it represent *O*;
  - b. It resembles *O* in the relevant respect(s), or would do if *O* existed;
  - c. The above resemblances are the intended effects of the actions that produced them; and

- d. Suitable viewers with the ability visually to recognise *O* are able to identify the intended respect(s) of resemblance and thereby work out that it is intended to represent *O*.<sup>32</sup>

So the Mona Lisa, according to Abell, depicts Lisa because Leo successfully intended that the Mona Lisa resemble and thereby represent Lisa and viewers able to recognise Lisa are able to recognise that the Mona Lisa resembles Lisa and thereby work out that the Mona Lisa is intended to represent Lisa.

The Gricean element of Abell's analysis is condition (d), which holds that viewers infer what a picture is intended to represent from what they recognise it as resembling: this condition corresponds to conditions (b)–(e) of analysis (7) and specifies that the role of resemblance in depictive representation is to allow audiences to infer the communicative intentions of perpetrators. So although the motivation Abell offers for her analysis – the need for an account of depiction in terms of resemblance which accommodates both the diversity of respects in which depictions resemble what they represent and the fact that those respects of resemblance can be recognised independently of knowing what pictures depict – is importantly different from the motivation I have given, the result is an analysis of depiction the central thesis of which is very similar to my own.

There are nine differences between Abell's analysis and analysis (7). Two concern the scope of the analyses: Abell's analysis is restricted to depiction by marked surfaces and allows for resemblances in visual respects only. This difference is due to the fact that the target of Abell's analysis is restricted to pictures in visual media: mimes, for example, are excluded because they are not marks on paper and collages are excluded if the respects in which they resemble what they represent are tactile rather than visual. This is not a reflection of inadequacy in Abell's analysis, but merely a reflection of the fact that the target of my analysis is all kinds of representation in virtue of resemblance whereas the target of hers is more limited.

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<sup>32</sup> This analysis supercedes that of Abell (2005a).

Two other differences are due to considerations I will discuss in Chapter 3. Abell's caveat that only suitable viewers with the relevant recognitional abilities need to be able to recognise the intended respects of resemblance and thereby infer what the depiction represents corresponds to my own caveat introduced in Section 3.1 that the audience be intended to recognise the perpetrator's communicative intentions only if the depiction reaches an audience of a certain type. Abell's conditions (b), which holds that the depiction must in fact resemble what it represents, and (c), which holds that this resemblance must be brought about by the perpetrator's intention, correspond to my requirement in Section 3.2 that the perpetrator's intentions be successful.

Two other differences are merely superficial. Abell stipulates, whereas I do not, that only the maker's intentions are relevant to depictive representation: however, in a later part of the paper Abell argues that the intentions of camera manufacturers may contribute to what a photograph depicts as well as the intentions of the photographer, so 'maker' must be understood fairly broadly. Abell's analysis summarizes communicative intentions as intentions to represent, whereas my own analysis unpacks communicative intentions in terms of the intention to produce an effect in the audience by means of recognition of that intention. This unpacking is important for my purposes because it draws out the analogy between depictive and descriptive representation and the priority of mental representation.

The remaining three differences are more substantial. First, Abell limits her analysis to accurate depiction, to avoid the problem of depictive misrepresentation (Abell offers a similar but slightly more complicated analysis of depictive misrepresentation). Second, to avoid the problem of the depiction of non-existents, Abell does not require that depictions do resemble what they represent, but only that they would resemble what they represent, if what they represented existed. Third, Abell is explicit that some depictions do not represent particulars in order to avoid the problem of the depiction of non-particulars. I discuss these three problems in detail in Chapter 7, where I suggest that depiction should be analysed as a relation towards states of affairs.

## 2.5 Conclusion

Combining resemblance with Grice's analysis of representation succeeds because it provides a non-incidental connection between representation and resemblance: the role of resemblance is to enable audiences to infer the communicative intentions of perpetrators. Since resemblance plays this role, there is a non-incidental connection between representation and resemblance. Hence, the analysis avoids the problem of the insufficiency of depiction for resemblance. The platitude that resemblance connects depictions to what they represent is secure, since resemblance, although insufficient, is not incidental to depictive representation.

As well as supporting the platitude that depiction is mediated by resemblance, the analysis supports the analogy between depictive and linguistic representation. Both depictive and linguistic representation, according to the analysis, depend on use: depictions and sentences both derive their meanings from the fact that they are used to induce belief, action, make-belief, seeing-in and other effects in their audiences. The difference is merely in the different ways that these effects are achieved: resemblance in the case of depiction replaces the role of precedent or convention in the case of language.

Finally, the analysis supports the conclusion that depictive representation is derivative upon mental representation: facts about what depictions represent depend upon facts about mental representation such as the contents of intentions and beliefs. This supports the conclusion that analyses of mental representation in terms of depictive representation or even directly in terms of resemblance are unlikely to succeed, especially if those analyses are interpreted as steps in a reductive analysis of all intentionality in terms of the physical. If mental representation is reducible to the physical, then that reduction must proceed directly and not via depictive representation.



## 3 Refining Depiction

I have argued that combining resemblance with Grice's analysis of meaning supplies an analysis which overcomes the insufficiency of many analyses of resemblance in terms of depiction. In the following sections, I will address further objections to the necessity and sufficiency of the analysis. I will argue that most of the examples are in fact familiar objections to Grice's analysis of meaning in general, rather than objections to its application to the specific case of depiction. As a result, the objections are open to familiar replies and amendments from the literature on Grice's analysis. This pattern, I will argue, supports both the platitude that depiction is mediated by resemblance and the strong analogy drawn between depictive and linguistic representation.

### 3.1 Absent Audiences

Grice analyses all meaning on the model of communication: meaning something, according to the analysis, constitutively involves the presence of an audience. But it may be argued that depiction, although it may sometimes involve communication, is not primarily directed at audiences. People may depict by doodling in their margins, drawing preparatory sketches for paintings, or tracing patterns in fogged-up glass, without intending that their doodles, sketches or traces ever find an audience. So depiction in the absence of an audience seems to be a counterexample to the application of Grice's analysis of meaning to depiction.

But in fact examples of depiction in the absence of an audience reveal no disanalogy between depiction and speaker meaning. People may mean things by writing in private diaries, doodling words in their margins, writing rough drafts or singing in the shower, without ever intending that anybody read their diaries, doodles, rough drafts or hear their singing. So while the primary cases of meaning may involve communication between an utterer and a separate audience, this is far from always the case: meaning something is possible even in the absence of an audience, so the absence of audiences is not only a

counterexample to the application of Grice's analysis to depiction, but a counterexample to Grice's analysis in general.<sup>33</sup>

For both the analysis of meaning and of depiction many of the examples can be accommodated without altering the analyses simply by a spirit of inclusiveness about who counts as an audience. The intended audience of a preparatory sketch, for example, may be the sketcher at a latter time. Similarly, the intended audience of doodling in margins may be the doodler, who wants to relieve his present boredom, singing in the shower may be intended for the enjoyment of the singer and a diary writer might be his or her own audience. Once it is allowed that the perpetrator may also be the audience, many of the problematic examples of depiction or meaning in the absence of an audience disappear.

However, not every example of depiction without an audience can be accommodated by this move. Imagine, for example, a pirate who, although he is sure of not forgetting the location of his treasure and intends to recover it in his own lifetime, leaves a treasure map for his heirs. The pirate does not intend the map to produce an effect in an audience, because he intends to find the treasure and destroy the map before his death. Nor does the pirate intend the map to produce a belief or other effect in himself, since he already possesses the relevant beliefs. Nevertheless, the map does depict the island on which the treasure is located.

But although the pirate does not intend the map to produce an effect in the audience, he does intend that if he were to die then the map would produce in his heirs knowledge of the treasure's whereabouts. That suggests that in order to accommodate this, the analysis should be amended to:

- (9) Something depicts another if and only if it is intended that *if the former reaches an audience of a certain type then:*
  - a. the former resembles the latter

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<sup>33</sup> See Grice (1989, 112-5) and Schiffer (1972, 76-80).

- b. the audience recognise that the former resembles the latter
- c. the audience infer at least in part from the fact that the former resembles the latter that it is intended:
  - d. that the former produce an effect in the audience
  - e. and that that effect be produced at least in part by means of the audience's recognition of intentions (a)-(e).

So the treasure map depicts the treasure island because the pirate intends that if his heirs discover the map then they will infer from the resemblance of the map to the island that the treasure is hidden on the island.

It is obvious that the same amendment has to be made to the analysis of speaker meaning. If, for example, I leave a note for my mother in law on the chance that she may call by while I am out, then I do not straightforwardly intend to induce an effect in my mother in law, because I don't intend her to call while I am out. Nevertheless, I do intend that if my mother in law sees the note, then it will induce an effect in her by means of recognition of my intentions (Schiffer, 1972, 73-6). So the analysis of meaning requires the same amendment as the analysis of depiction.

Two clarifications. First, notice that the utterance or the depiction must not only reach an audience, but reach an audience of a certain type. That's because, for many utterances and depictions the person responsible does not intend his or her intentions to be recognised by all audiences: an allegorical writer or painter, for example, may intend his or her intentions to be recognised by the cognoscenti, but not by the censors. The cognoscenti belong to the intended type of audience; censors do not.

Second, the condition that a depiction resembles what it represents in analysis (8) occurs within the scope of a conditional, so that the depiction need only resemble what it represents if the antecedent of that conditional is fulfilled and the depiction actually reaches an audience of the relevant type. It might be objected that resemblance ought to be a necessary condition for depiction, so that the resemblance of depiction to depicted ought to occur regardless of whether or not the depiction reaches an audience of the

relevant type. If this is so, then the necessity of analysis (8) for depiction is gained only at the cost of sufficiency, since the amendment wrongly includes examples of depiction which don't actually resemble what they represent.

However, I think that the result that depiction is not a necessary condition for resemblance is in fact correct. Consider, for example, a drawing in invisible ink. If the drawing does not reach an audience, and so the ink does not become visible, then the drawing will not resemble what it depicts in the relevant respect. Nevertheless, the drawing will continue to depict what it does, because if it reached an audience of the relevant type, then the ink would become visible and the drawing would come to resemble what it represents. This suggests that it is right for the condition of resemblance to be within the scope of a conditional.

### 3.2 Speaker and Sentence Meaning

Suppose that a madman scribbles messily on a page. The madman has a mad belief that the scribble resembles a mountain landscape in Tibet and this belief allows him to intend that the audience form beliefs about the Tibetan landscape by means of recognising the madman's intention to form these beliefs. Despite meeting the conditions of the analysis of depiction, the scribble is not a depiction of the Tibetan landscape. The example may be purported to show a problematic disanalogy between depiction and speaker meaning, by showing that speaker meaning combined with resemblance is insufficient for depiction.

But there is an analogous counterexample, given by Paul Ziff (1957), to the analysis of speaker meaning. Suppose a madman believes that 'Gleeg gleeg gleeg' means in English that it is snowing in Tibet. The madman might utter 'Gleeg gleeg gleeg' intending the utterance to induce the audience to believe that it is snowing in Tibet by means of recognition of that intention. But the madman's utterance of 'Gleeg gleeg gleeg' is

meaningless. So, although the madman's utterance meets the conditions of Grice's analysis of speaker meaning, it does not seem to mean that it is snowing in Tibet.<sup>34</sup>

There is one response to this objection that would break the analogy between depiction and speaker meaning. It may be granted that 'Gleeg, gleeg, gleeg' in the example has the speaker meaning that it is snowing in Tibet, but denied that granting this is problematic on the grounds that granting it would not adversely effect the analysis of sentence meaning. This would be unproblematic if the only role of speaker meaning was analysing sentence meaning as the conventional or usual speaker meaning of a sentence, since 'Gleeg, gleeg, gleeg' would not be conventionally or usually used to speaker mean that it is snowing in Tibet.<sup>35</sup>

However, the analysis of sentence meaning is not the only role of the analysis of speaker meaning. The analysis of speaker meaning is also required to provide for utterances with meaning but no conventional meaning, utterances made with meanings other than their usual or conventional meanings such as metaphors or irony, as well as meanings of non-linguistic modes of communication such as gesturing or depiction. If it were granted that 'Gleeg, gleeg, gleeg' speaker meant that it is snowing in Tibet, this would adversely effect the analysis of these types of meaning: a non-conventional gesture, for example, would be wrongly counted as meaning anything it is intended to mean.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> A similar remark is made by Wittgenstein: "Can I say 'bububu' and mean 'If it doesn't rain I shall go for a walk'? – It is only in a language that I can mean something by something" (1956, 38).

<sup>35</sup> For example, Lycan (2000, 108-9) gives this response.

<sup>36</sup> Grice (1989, 90-3) introduces a distinction between two kinds of speaker meaning: utterance occasion meaning and utterer's occasion meaning. It may be granted that 'Gleeg, gleeg, gleeg' is an example of utterer's occasion meaning but not that it is an example of utterance occasion meaning.

To avoid the problem, the analysis has to be altered to specify that the perpetrator's intentions be successful, so that mad utterances of sentences like 'Gleeg, gleeg, gleeg' do not possess speaker meaning. Similarly, the analysis of depiction should be altered so that mad scribbles with the relevant intentions are excluded, which leads to the following analysis:

- (10) Something depicts another if and only if it is intended *successfully* that if the former reaches an audience of a certain type then:
- a. the former resembles the latter
  - b. the audience recognise that the former resembles the latter
  - c. the audience infer at least in part from the fact that the former resembles the latter that it is intended:
    - d. that the former produce an effect in the audience
    - e. and that that effect be produced at least in part by means of the audience's recognition of intentions (a)-(e).

So, for example, the Mona Lisa depicts Lisa because Leo intended successfully that an audience recognise that the Mona Lisa resembles Lisa and infer that Leo wanted to induce an effect in them by means of recognition of his intentions.

So the example of unsuccessful attempts at depiction does not show that the analysis of depiction should parallel the analysis of sentence meaning instead of the analysis of speaker meaning. However, if the analogy between depiction and language which I am pursuing is correct, there ought to be an analogy between depiction and sentence meaning as well as between depiction and speaker meaning. In Chapter 4, I will develop the analogy between depiction and sentence meaning further by addressing an objection against the platitude that depiction is mediated by resemblance which attempts to exploit the analogy between depiction and sentence meaning instead of speaker meaning.

### 3.3 Intentions

Suppose you took a photograph of your foot by accidentally dropping your camera. Then you didn't intend the photo to resemble your foot. Nor did you intend that anybody

infer anything from the resemblance of the photo to your foot or that the photograph produce an effect in an audience by means of recognition of your intention. Nevertheless, the photograph still seems to depict your foot. The objection is important because it suggests that the analysis of depiction – or at least the analysis of photographic depiction – should parallel natural rather non-natural representation, in which case the application of Grice's analysis of meaning to depiction is misguided.

However, it's important to notice that the problem is not in fact confined to photography, but also arises for the analysis of non-photographic depictions and speaker meaning in terms of intention as well. In the case of non-photographic depictions, spilt paint, for example, may lead to unintended resemblances which it is nevertheless intuitive to say are depictive. A frustrated painter, for example, may accidentally achieve a desirable but elusive effect by angrily throwing the brush at the canvas in despair (Livingston, 2005, vii). The result seems to be a depiction of an effect which is unaccompanied by the corresponding intention.

The same point applies to meaning in general, including linguistic meaning. A Freudian slip, for example, may betray a meaning which the speaker does not intend to convey. And just as dropping my camera may produce an accidental photograph of my foot, it is possible, although not likely, that accidentally dropping my typewriter will cause it to produce a written description of my foot, without any intention on my part to represent anything. It follows that the apparent existence of unintended meaning is not limited merely to the case of photographs, but is a general problem for the analysis of representation in terms of intention.

As for examples of meaning in the absence of an audience, purported examples of meaning or depiction without intention can be accommodated in a number of ways. The first way is liberality about which intentions may contribute to depictive representation. If I drop my camera and it accidentally photographs my foot, for example, then I may still form the intentions relevant for it to depict my foot when I take the film to be developed or when I place it in my photo album. Similarly, accidentally spilt paint may

depict in virtue of intentions the painter forms after the accident, which are recognisable due to the fact that the painter retains the effect by refraining from removing the spill.

Another way to resolve the problem is to appeal to intentions other than those of the photographer or painter. For example, a popular response, suggested by both Hopkins (1998, 77) and Abell (2005a), is to argue that the relevant intentions are present by granting that it is not the intentions of the photographer which are important but rather the intentions of the camera's manufacturers. This approach predicts that the photograph resulting from your camera being dropped is a photograph of your foot, because the camera's manufacturers intended that the photograph would resemble your foot if it was dropped in this manner. If this is right, then accidentally taken photographs are not unaccompanied by the relevant intentions after all.

As well as the intentions of camera manufacturers it is possible to appeal to the intentions of the chemist who develops the photo or the person who pastes it in his or her album. In the case of accidentally spilt paint, the intentions of artists may be replaced by the intentions of the curators who hang the work. In the linguistic case, the sound-bite of a politician's voice may acquire a new meaning due to the intentions of the journalists and broadcasters who play it, perhaps out of context, on radio and television. Just as many purported examples of depiction in the absence of an audience can be explained away by liberality about who the audience may be, purported examples of depiction in the absence of intention can be explained away by liberality about which intentions may contribute.

But additional intentions may not be available in all cases. Even if, for example, I drop my Polaroid camera and it accidentally photographs my foot and then automatically develops the photo, which I remain unaware of and form no intentions in regard to, there is still the temptation to say that that photograph is a depiction of my foot. Similarly, a Freudian slip – unless attributed to unlikely subconscious intentions – may be completely unaccompanied by any intentions, especially if the slip appears to reveal something which the speaker does not wish to be known. I will argue, however, that



such cases are not counterexamples to the necessity of the analysis of depiction or to the necessity of the analysis of speaker meaning, since it is plausible to deny that the examples truly depict or speaker mean anything.

There are related examples in which even the intentions of the camera's manufacturers are absent. Suppose, for example, that a camera is created accidentally by a random collision of materials, without the normal procedure of design and manufacturing and thus without the intentions of any designers or manufacturers. Suppose that this photograph happens to shoot photos at regular intervals, without anyone intending that those photos be shot. Just as photographs taken accidentally are intuitively depictions, photographs taken unintentionally by accidentally created cameras are also intuitively depictions, so even appealing to the intentions of manufacturers isn't able to resolve the problem.

One possible, but misguided, response to this problem is to split the analysis of depiction into two separate analyses: one of non-natural depiction, such as painting and drawing, and one of natural depictions, such as photographic depiction. The analysis of non-natural depiction would combine, as I argued above, resemblance with Grice's analysis of meaning, whereas the analysis of photographic depiction would somehow combine resemblance with causation or indication. This proposal is a very intuitive one, but unfortunately it cannot succeed: the problem is that there is no non-incidental role for resemblance to play in natural representation.

Take, for example, footprints. Footprints naturally represent the feet of the animals that make them. Furthermore, footprints normally resemble the feet of the animals that make them, because they are normally the same shape as the prints. If photographic depiction were to be analysed by combining causation and resemblance, then such an analysis would be bound to include footprints as well as photographs, which seems to be the wrong result, especially since the resemblance between feet and prints is incidental to the representation between feet and prints: even had the prints not resembled the feet, they would still represent the feet merely in virtue of being caused by the feet.

So the correct response is to deny that accidentally taken photographs, in the absence of an analogy with sentence meaning and further intentions in their development and presentation, are really depictions. While this is counterintuitive, it may still be conceded that an accidentally taken photograph of my foot is a natural representation of my foot, but due to the causal connection between my photograph and my foot, rather than because of the resemblance between them. This concession should soften the blow to intuition since, while not all accidentally taken photographs are classified as depictions, all are still rightly included as natural representations.

So. Photographs in general possess natural meaning, because properties of photographs generally depend causally on the properties of the scenes that they are of. Nevertheless, photographs do not depict what they do in virtue of possessing this natural meaning, since their resemblance to what they represent is merely incidental to their natural representation of it. Instead, photographs depict what they do in virtue of their perpetrators' intentions that their audiences infer the communicative intentions of the perpetrators from the resemblances of the photos towards what they represent.

So most photographs are still classified as depictions even though it is denied that all are, since photographs may possess non-natural as well as natural meaning. A photograph of a person represents the person in two distinct ways: it depicts the person because its resemblance to the person is intended to allow audiences to infer the photographer's communicative intentions, and it also naturally represents the person because its features are causally connected to the features of the person. This captures the important similarity between photographs, except those produced accidentally, and other kinds of depiction.

The analogous problem for the analysis of meaning in general has the same solution. In the case, for example, of a Freudian slip which reveals something unintended about the speaker, the solution is to deny that the slip has non-natural meaning and to argue instead that it is really an instance of natural meaning: a Freudian slip is revealing, if it is

revealing at all, merely due to a causal connection with the speaker's psychology. If, on the other hand, there is no such causal connection – in the case of either a purportedly accidental depiction or description in which no intentions are present either – then there are no grounds for attributing representational significance at all.

The final response available to these worries is to distinguish between a kind of depiction analogous to speaker meaning and another kind analogous to sentence meaning. Just as a person who utters a sentence whose meaning they do not understand may accidentally utter a sentence which means something which they do not intend, a person who does not know that the top of a map, for example, represents north may accidentally depict the orientation of a nation in a sense of depiction analogous to sentence meaning. The analogy developed between depictive symbol systems and conventional languages in Chapter 4, which is very closely related to the analysis of depiction in this chapter, shows how this option might be developed.

### 3.4 Photographs

There is still a residual problem connected with photographs. When a photograph is presented as evidence it is intended to produce a belief in its audience. But if so, then the photograph is usually intended to produce the belief by means of recognition of its causal connection to what it represents and not by means of recognition of the intentions of the photograph's perpetrator. So applying Grice's analysis of meaning to the sense in which depiction is representational may still appear to incorrectly exclude photographs by ignoring the fact that photographic representation is more naturally assimilated to natural than to non-natural representation.

But an analogous problem arises in applying Grice's analysis to linguistic meaning. Suppose I give you an argument proceeding from premises you already believe to a conclusion I intend to convince you of. Then I mean by uttering the words of the conclusion that the conclusion is true. But I don't intend you to believe the conclusion by means of recognising my intention that you believe it; rather, because I am offering

an argument, I want you to believe the conclusion by means of inferring it from the premises (Schiffer, 1972, 42-3). The condition that effects be produced by means of recognition incorrectly excludes arguments as well as photographs.

All this suggests that both the analyses of depiction and meaning should be weakened so that the intended effect need merely be accompanied by, rather than produced by means of, recognition of intention. That would lead to the following analysis of depiction:

- (11) Something depicts another if and only if it is intended successfully that if the former reaches an audience of a certain type then:
- a. the former resembles the latter
  - b. the audience recognise that the former resembles the latter
  - c. the audience infer at least in part from the fact that the former resembles the latter that it is intended:
  - d. that the former induce an effect in the audience
  - e. *and that the audience recognise intentions (a)-(e).*

This analysis allows for the inclusion of photographs, because it requires only that the effect in the audience is intended to be produced somehow or other, rather than by means of recognition of intention.

But this weakening comes at the cost of the sufficiency of the analysis. Imagine I intend a brightly painted canvass to produce in you an epileptic fit. Further, imagine that the canvass looks like canvasses that I have used to cause you epileptic fits in the past. You infer from this that I intend the canvass to produce the fit and that I intend you to recognise my intentions. The case meets the conditions of the analysis, but it does not seem to be an example of depiction, because of the non-rational nature of the intended effect.<sup>37</sup>

Under the earlier analysis, the example would have been ruled out because although your recognition of my intention would accompany your epileptic fit, your fit would not

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<sup>37</sup> See Schiffer (1972, 55-6) for an analogous counterexample to the analysis of meaning.

be produced by means of recognition of my intention, since your recognition of my intention for you to have a fit would provide you with no reason to have one. But, as the examples of photographs and arguments showed, requiring that the audience's recognition of the perpetrator's intention to produce the effect be the audience's reason for enjoying the effect makes the analysis too strong.

This suggests that the audience must be given some reason in order to enjoy the intended effect, but that that reason need not always be provided by the audience's recognition of the perpetrator's intention. That leads to the following analysis of depiction:

- (12) Something depicts another if and only if it is intended successfully that if the former reaches an audience of a certain type then:
- a. the former resembles the latter
  - b. the audience recognise that the former resembles the latter
  - c. the audience infer at least in part from the fact that the former resembles the latter that it is intended:
  - d. that the former induce an effect in the audience
  - e. *that this effect be induced by means of providing a reason*
  - f. and that the audience recognise intentions (a)-(f).

This analysis excludes the case of the epileptic fit, because in that case I provide you with no reason to have a fit, but still includes the case of photographs, because their evidential connection to what they represent tends to provide a reason for believing what they represent.<sup>38</sup>

Advertising, which is frequently unreasonable, might appear problematic for the idea that meaning and depiction require the provision of reasons. For example, the intended effect of an advertising photograph showing attractive people eating ice-cream may be to induce the audience to eat ice-cream. But although such a photograph is intuitively a depiction of attractive people eating ice-cream, and although the photograph intuitively

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<sup>38</sup> See Schiffer (1972, 57-8) for an analogous amendment to the analysis of meaning.

means that the audience should eat ice-cream, it intuitively fails to give the audience any good reason to eat ice-cream.

Advertisements frequently fail to provide good reasons, but this is compatible with the analysis because they do provide bad reasons. The reason the photograph of attractive people eating ice-cream provides for eating ice-cream is that attractive people eat ice-cream. It may be false that attractive people eat ice-cream, and even if they do so it would not be a good reason to eat ice-cream, but it is a reason nonetheless. So advertising does not provide counterexamples to the necessity of the analysis of meaning or depiction.

It is compatible with this response that some advertising is intended to merely cause its effects in the audience, without providing a reason, as long as it is not the case that such advertisements mean or depict anything. To the extent that subliminal advertising, for example, is supposed to exert its influence purely causally, I do not think it counterintuitive to deny that it does so without meaning or depicting anything.<sup>39</sup>

### 3.5 Conclusion

In the previous sections, I considered four kinds of counterexample to the application of Grice's analysis of meaning to the analysis of depiction and argued that those counterexamples were in fact counterexamples to Grice's analysis in general. In each case, I argued that it was possible to defend the analysis by either redescribing the examples or making familiar and intuitive revisions to the analysis. However, it is very probable that there are many more counterexamples to consider, some of which will be susceptible to redescription but some of which will require revisions to the analysis.

Nevertheless, I suggest that no potential counterexample can show that depiction cannot

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<sup>39</sup> See, for example, Pateman (1980; 1983) for further discussion of the application of philosophy of language to advertising.

in principle be analysed by combining Grice's analysis of meaning with resemblance. The reason is that, as the discussion of the examples in this chapter suggest, any counterexample to the application of Grice's analysis to depiction will also be a counterexample to the application of Grice's analysis in general. It follows that whatever response is available for defending Grice's analysis in general will also be available for defending the application of Grice's analysis to depiction.

Of course, if any counterexample to the application of Grice's analysis of meaning to depiction is also an in principle counterexample to Grice's analysis of meaning in general, then this defence will be unavailable. However, it seems to me that the success of Grice's analysis in addressing those counterexamples which have been raised in the past suggest that it is resilient enough to address most potential examples, even if those counterexamples are numerous enough to make the final analysis even more cumbersome than it now is. A counterexample in principle would require a case in which there was a difference in meaning with no difference whatsoever in the intentions and beliefs of perpetrators and audiences. Previous discussion of Grice's analysis suggests that no such counterexample is available.

## 4 Depictive Structure

There are two kinds of philosophy of language, which address two different kinds of question. The first kind is descriptive: it answers questions about what kinds of syntax and semantics our languages have. Answers to these descriptive questions include, for example, the thesis that the semantic value of a name is its referent and the thesis that the meaning of a sentence depends on the meaning of its parts. The second kind is foundational: it answers questions about what makes it the case that our languages have the syntax and semantics that they do. Answers to these descriptive questions include, for example, the causal theory of reference and the thesis that language is mediated by convention.<sup>40</sup>

Correspondingly, there are two kinds of question about the nature of depiction: descriptive questions about the syntax and semantics of pictures, and foundational questions about how depictive symbol systems come to have the syntax and semantics they do. The descriptive questions include, for example, the question of whether or not the semantics of depiction is compositional or the question of whether depictive representation is analogue or digital. The foundational questions include the issue of whether depiction is mediated by resemblance or whether it is instead mediated by convention or causation. This chapter addresses descriptive issues about the syntax and semantics of depiction.

According to the platitude that depiction is mediated by resemblance, the difference between depiction and other kinds of representation is a foundational issue about what makes it the case that depictions represent what they do. An important alternative – argued originally by Goodman (1968) and more recently by John Kulvicki (2003; 2006) – is that the difference between depiction and other kinds of representation is a descriptive issue concerning the syntactic and semantic properties of depictive symbol

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<sup>40</sup> See Lewis (1969, 204) and Stalnaker (1984, 32-5; 1997, 166-8).



systems. As Goodman writes: "...whether a denoting symbol is representational [depictive] depends not upon whether it resembles what it denotes but upon its own relationships to other symbols in a given system." (1968, 226).

In this chapter, I argue against definitions of depiction in terms of its syntactic and semantic properties. Goodman proposes that three properties are necessary and jointly sufficient for a symbol system to be depictive: syntactic density, semantic density and relative repleteness. After explaining the nature of symbol systems and these properties of them, I will argue that they are neither individually necessary nor jointly sufficient for a symbol system to be depictive. Three further properties have been proposed as necessary and sufficient, one by Kent Bach and two by Kulvicki: continuous correlation, syntactic sensitivity and transparency. I will argue that none of these properties provide necessary and sufficient conditions for depiction either.

The project of defining depiction syntactically and semantically may be difficult to implement in detail, but this will not convince many of the impossibility of implementing it in principle. I will close with a more principled objection to the project: I will argue that depiction cannot be defined in terms of syntactic and semantic properties of symbol systems by arguing that, although all depictions trivially belong to symbol systems in the abstract, not all depictions belong to symbol systems in use. I conclude that whatever syntactic and semantic differences there are between depictive and descriptive symbol systems are mere contingencies, more like the differences between spoken and written language than constitutive differences between kinds of representation.

#### 4.1 Symbol Systems

A symbol system, according to Goodman's definition, is a set of characters correlated with a set of extensions (1968, 143). In the symbol system of Arabic numerals, for example, the characters are the numerals '1', '2', '3', '4'... and the extensions are the numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, ... and so on. The symbol system correlates '1' with 1, '2' with 2, '3'

with 3, '4' with 4, and so on. According to Goodman, alphabets, languages, notations, musical scores and various kinds of depiction are all symbol systems and different kinds of symbol system are distinguished by differences in their syntactic and semantic properties.

One clarification. By a correlation between a set of characters and a set of extensions, Goodman simply means a function from the characters to the extensions. A function is a mapping between two sets: it delivers a member of the second set for every member of the first set. The function of doubling, for example, takes every member of the set of natural numbers to another member of that set: it takes 1 to 2, 2 to 4, 3 to 6, 4 to 8, and so on. Every mapping between two sets, no matter how arbitrary, is a function. So a symbol system, according to this clarification, should be defined as a function from characters to extensions.

The advantage of defining symbol systems as functions from characters to extensions is that any symbol system can be fully specified by such a function. The symbol system of traffic lights, for example, is fully specified by the function that takes green to go, orange to slow and red to stop. Similarly, the symbol system of Arabic numerals is fully specified by the function that takes '1' to 1, '2' to 2 and each other numeral to the number it represents. Once the relevant function from characters to extensions has been specified, there is then no further question about what the characters of a symbol system represent in that symbol system.

Depiction, according to Goodman, is a kind of symbol system. The Mona Lisa, for example, is supposed by Goodman to depict Lisa because the Mona Lisa belongs to a symbol system in which the Mona Lisa is a member of the set of characters and Lisa is a member of the set of extensions and whose function maps the Mona Lisa to Lisa. The symbol system to which the Mona Lisa belongs is supposed to be depictive because it belongs to a symbol system which is syntactically dense, semantically dense and relatively replete. The following sections explain these notions and argue that they are neither individually necessary nor jointly sufficient for a symbol system to be depictive.

## 4.2 Syntactic Density

The first property Goodman proposes is necessary for depiction is syntactic density. A symbol system is syntactically dense, according to Goodman's definition, if and only if it has "...an infinite number of characters so ordered that between each two there is a third" (1968, 163). So, for example, the symbol system of an analogue clock is syntactically dense because between every two positions of its minute hand, which are the characters of the clock's symbol system, there is a third intermediate position: the position of the clock's hand at  $90.5^\circ$ , for example, is a character between the positions of  $90^\circ$  and  $91^\circ$ .

There is a lacuna in the definition as stated, since Goodman fails to specify which ordering of the characters of a symbol system is relevant to whether it is dense. In the mathematical sense, any arrangement of the members of a set count as an ordering of that set. For example the set with members a, b and c has six orderings: abc, acb, bac, bca, cab, and cba. This holds no matter how arbitrary the arrangement or ordering and regardless of whether it is capable of being written down. Although numbers, for example, are naturally given in ascending order beginning with 1, 2, 3, 4..., any other arrangement, no matter how unnatural, also counts as an ordering of the numbers.

In the second edition of *Languages of Art*, Goodman addresses this problem by writing that "...the ordering in question is understood to be such that any element lying between two others is less discriminable from each of them than they are from each other." (1976, 136). So, for example, 'b' is not ordered between 'a' and 'c' in the relevant sense because 'b' is not less discriminable from 'a' and 'c' than 'a' and 'c' are from each other. The position of the clock's hand at  $90.5^\circ$ , however, is between  $90^\circ$  and  $91^\circ$ , since it is

easier to distinguish  $90^\circ$  and  $91^\circ$  from each other than it is to distinguish either from  $90.5^\circ$ .<sup>41</sup>

Syntactic density is not a necessary condition for a symbol system to be depictive. Consider, for example, the symbol system of diagrams used to illustrate positions in chess. The diagrams consist of eight by eight grids of alternating black and white squares, various figurines representing the pieces may occupy the centre of each square, and the various arrangements of the figurines represent the various positions possible in a game of chess as well as some positions, such as those in which one king is absent, which are impossible. Intuitively, the symbol system is depictive, but it is not syntactically dense.

There are two reasons that chess diagrams are not syntactically dense. Firstly, chess diagrams are not syntactically dense because there are only a finite number of characters in the system. The number of diagrams is limited by the fact that there is a maximum – excluding diagrams representing illegal positions – of thirty-two figurines which may occupy only sixty-four squares. Although large, the number of characters in the symbol system is not infinite, and so there is no ordering of the characters – let alone an ordering of the kind relevant for syntactic density – such that there is a third character between every pair of characters in the symbol system.

Second, chess diagrams are not syntactically dense because discriminability does not provide any interesting ordering of the characters in the symbol system. Most of the diagrams in the symbol system can be easily discriminated from each other, since the pieces are always represented by distinctive figurines positioned in the centre of their squares so that it will be difficult to mistake their positions. It is no more difficult to discriminate between diagrams of, for example, the opening position and diagrams of

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<sup>41</sup> Hyman (2006, 174) raises further objections to this definition. See, for example, Haugeland (1981), Kulvicki (2006, 13-44), Lewis (1971) and Walton (1971a) for further discussion of definitional issues in *Languages of Art*.

the position in which white's king's pawn is advanced one square than it is to discriminate between diagrams of the opening position and of the position in which white's king's pawn is advanced two squares.

If the symbol system of chess diagrams were to record not only the squares the pieces occupy, but also their exact locations within or on the edges of those squares, then the symbol system of chess diagrams might have had an infinite number of characters such that between every pair there is a third which is less discriminable than either of them. But if the symbol system were like this, then its ability to serve the purpose of illustrating chess positions would be undermined, since it would sometimes contain too much information about the exact location of a piece within a square and at other times leave ambiguous which square on the board the pieces are purported to occupy. Hence, redescribing the example in this way does not help to defend the necessity of syntactic density.

#### 4.3 Semantic Density

Semantic density – the second condition Goodman proposes is necessary for depiction – is like syntactic density, except it applies to the extensions rather than the characters of symbol systems. A symbol system is semantically dense, according to Goodman's definition, if and only if there is "an infinite number of compliance-classes [extensions] so ordered that between each two there is a third..." (1968, 153). So, for example, the symbol system of a clock is dense because between every pair of times, which are the extensions of the symbol system, there is a third intermediate time: three o'clock, for example, is between six o'clock and twelve o'clock.

This definition of semantic density suffers problems analogous to the original definition of syntactic density. Whilst there is a fairly salient ordering of time, it is generally unclear which orderings of a set of extensions are relevant for semantic density, since any arbitrary arrangement of the set qualifies as an ordering of it. So, as for syntactically dense symbol systems, semantically dense symbol systems should be defined as those

symbol systems such that between every pair of extensions in the symbol system there is a third extension which is less discriminable from either of the first pair of extensions than they are from each other.

As it does for syntactic density, the symbol system of chess diagrams shows that semantic density is not a necessary condition of depictive symbol systems. The extensions of the symbol system are positions on the chess board. There is only a finite number of such positions, so the system does not provide for an infinite number of extensions. And since an arrangement in which a piece overlaps two squares does not count as a position in the game, most positions in the game are equally discriminable from each other, so there is no interesting ordering of the positions on the basis of which positions are more easily discriminated from which.

#### 4.4 Relative Repleteness

Relative repleteness is the third condition that Goodman holds is individually necessary and jointly sufficient with syntactic and semantic density for a symbol system to be depictive. One symbol system is replete relative to another, according to Goodman's (1968, 229-30) definition, if and only if the number of an inscription's features relevant to character membership in the former system is greater than in the latter. Venn diagrams illustrating the overlap of sets, for example, are less replete than similar diagrams used to illustrate both overlap and size of sets, because the relative size of an inscription's circles is irrelevant to which Venn diagram it inscribes but highly relevant to which diagram it inscribes in the similar system used to represent both overlap and size.

One clarification. Characters, according to Goodman's definition, are sets of inscriptions, where inscriptions are all the physical noises, sounds, marks and so forth used for representation (1968, 131). So, for example, in the symbol system of the alphabet, the letters are defined as the set of their inscriptions: 'a' is the set of inscriptions of 'a', 'b' the set of inscriptions of 'b', and so forth. So the properties

relevant to character membership are the properties of an inscription relevant to whether it is a member of the set which constitutes the character. Shape, for example, is relevant to character membership in the alphabet, because the shape of an inscription is relevant to whether or not it is a member of a set constituting a letter.

Goodman claims that relative repleteness is both necessary and jointly sufficient with syntactic and semantic density for a symbol system to be depictive. The symbol system of painting, for example, is replete relative to the symbol system of the alphabet, since in the case of the alphabet the shape and orientation of an inscription is plausibly sufficient to determine which letter is inscribed by that inscription, whereas in the case of a painting not only the shape but also the size, colour and even texture may effect what the painting represents, and thus what depiction it inscribes. So it is at least *prima facie* plausible that relative repleteness is a necessary and jointly sufficient condition for a symbol system to be depictive.

But the example of stick figures shows that relative repleteness is not necessary for a symbol system to be depictive. Stick figures are depictions drawn with narrow black lines and shapes which represent people and their limbs or appendages. The symbol system of stick figures is not more replete than the symbol system of the alphabet, since in both symbol systems the only properties of inscriptions relevant to membership of a character is an inscription's shape and orientation: shade and thickness of line, for example, is equally irrelevant in both symbol systems. The symbol system of stick figures is depictive but not relatively replete – that is, not more replete than the alphabet – so relative repleteness is not necessary for a symbol system to be depictive.

An elaboration of the example of the clock shows that relative repleteness is not sufficient for a symbol system to be depictive either. Imagine a clock such that, as well as the direction of the hour hand representing the hour and the direction of the minute hand representing the minute, the thickness, colour, shape, length and other properties of the clock's hand represent the second, date, year and other properties of the time. The symbol system to which this clock belongs is much more replete than the symbol system

to which ordinary clocks belong, but this is not sufficient for the symbol system of this clock to be depictive. Merely having more properties which are relevant to membership of its characters is not a sufficient condition for a symbol system to be depictive.<sup>42</sup>

#### 4.5 Syntactic Sensitivity

In the last three sections, I argued that the three conditions proposed by Goodman – syntactic density, semantic density and relative repleteness – are neither individually necessary nor jointly sufficient for a symbol system to be depictive. In the next three sections, I will discuss three alternative conditions designed to overcome the problems of the conditions proposed by Goodman: syntactic sensitivity, transparency and continuous correlation. I will argue that, like Goodman’s, none of these conditions are either individually necessary nor jointly sufficient for depiction, before arguing that no definition of depiction in terms of syntactic and semantic properties can succeed.

One symbol system is syntactically more sensitive than another, according to Kulvicki’s definition, if and only if “the changes in SRPs [syntactically relevant properties] sufficient for a change in syntactic identity in the latter are properly included among the changes in SRPs sufficient for a change in syntactic identity in the former” (2006, 35). So Venn diagrams illustrating the overlap of sets, for example, are less syntactically sensitive than similar diagrams illustrating both overlap and relative size of sets, because overlap of circles, the syntactically relevant property of Venn diagrams, is included amongst overlap and relative size of circles, the syntactically relevant property of the similar diagrams which also represent the relative size of sets.

Syntactic sensitivity is a more plausible necessary condition than relative repleteness. Although stick figures are not replete relative to the alphabet, for example, stick figures are more syntactically sensitive than the alphabet, since a change in the syntactically relevant properties of a letter is sufficient for a change in the syntactically relevant

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<sup>42</sup> See Peacocke (1987, 405) for a very similar example.



properties of a stick figure, but not vice versa. If the dot on an inscription of 'i', for example, were slightly larger, this would not make a difference to whether the inscription was an 'i', but if the same inscription was a stick figure of a limbless person, a change in the size of the dot changes what the inscription is of: the bigger the dot, the bigger the head of the person represented.

But syntactic sensitivity, like relative repleteness, is not a necessary condition for a symbol system to be depictive. Compare the symbol system of chess diagrams with the symbol system of the alphabet. In both symbol systems, the only syntactically relevant property is the distribution of ink. In both systems major, but not minor, changes in the distribution of ink do not result in changes of syntactic identity. So the symbol system of chess diagrams and the symbol system of the alphabet are equally syntactically sensitive, although the symbol system of chess diagrams is depictive and the symbol system of the alphabet is not. Hence, syntactic sensitivity is not a necessary condition of depiction.

#### 4.6 Transparency

No combination of syntactic density, semantic density, relative repleteness or syntactic sensitivity is jointly sufficient for a symbol system to be depictive. A symbol system of colour coded pie charts, for example, may be syntactically and semantically dense as well as both relatively replete and syntactically sensitive compared to a similar system in which colour is irrelevant, without being a depictive system. In order to solve this problem, Kulvicki proposes that syntactic sensitivity combined with transparency is jointly sufficient for a symbol system to be depictive. In this section, I argue that transparency is not sufficient for depiction, even jointly with syntactic sensitivity.

A symbol system is transparent, according to Kulvicki's definition, if and only if for every inscription of a character in the system which represents another inscription, the former inscription is of the same syntactic type as the latter (Kulvicki, 2006, 53). So, for example, photography is supposed to be transparent because photographs of photographs have the same syntactic properties as the photographs they are of. Just as a photograph

of a snowfield is white, for example, a photograph of a photograph of a snowfield is also white. Photography, according to Kulvicki, is depictive because photographs are supposed to be both syntactically sensitive and transparent.

Transparency alone is not a sufficient condition for a symbol system to be depictive. Take, for example, a symbol system of quotation in which letters represent themselves, so that 'a' represents 'a', 'b' represents 'b', 'c' represents 'c', and so forth. This symbol system is not depictive, but it is transparent: inscription of letters in the system are of the same syntactic type whenever one represents the other, since 'a' represents 'a' and 'a' is of the same syntactic type as 'a', 'b' represents 'b' and 'b' is of the same syntactic type as 'b', and so on. So since the symbol system of using letters to represent themselves is transparent but not depictive, transparency is not a sufficient condition for depiction.

Nor is transparency jointly sufficient for depiction in combination with syntactic sensitivity. Compare, for example, the symbol system of using German letters to represent themselves and the symbol system of using English letters to represent themselves. Since 'ß' is a letter in German but not a letter in English there is one additional property – the property of being an inscription of 'ß' – relevant to syntactic identity in the symbol system of German letters representing themselves than in the symbol system of English letters representing themselves. So the system of German letters representing themselves is both transparent and syntactically more sensitive than the system of English letters representing themselves, but not depictive.

#### 4.7 Continuous Correlation

Kent Bach (1970) has proposed that depiction can be distinguished from other kinds of symbol system through a condition he calls continuous correlation. A symbol system is continuously correlated, according to Bach's definition, if and only if for every character that is between another two, that character's extension is between the extensions of the other two (Bach, 1970, 136). Analogue clocks, for example, are continuously correlated because whenever the position of the hand is between two other positions, the time

represented by that position is between the two times represented by the two other positions.

Two clarifications. Firstly, “continuous” is usually used to refer to the opposite of discreet, but it should not be taken to have that connotation in this context. The distinction Bach draws using continuous correlation is orthogonal to the distinction between continuous and discreet measurements: millimetres, for example, are a continuous measure, but the symbol system of measurement in millimetres is not continuously correlated. The distinction is important in this context, since the distinction between discreet and continuous measures is related to Goodman’s definition of syntactic and semantic density in terms of discriminability.

Secondly, Bach’s definition faces the problem of ordering faced by Goodman’s original definitions of syntactic and semantic density. Every symbol system with infinite characters and extensions has an ordering relative to which the condition of continuous correlation is met. If the Arabic numerals, for example, were ordered ‘1’, ‘2’, ‘3’, ‘4’, ‘5’ ... and so on and the numbers ordered 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 ... and so on consecutively, then the symbol system of Arabic numerals would meet the condition of continuous correlation. But Bach clearly intends that the Arabic numerals don’t meet that condition, so he must specify an ordering of characters and extensions which excludes this case.

Bach recognises this problem and attempts to avoid it by stipulating that the relevant ordering or sense of being in between must be natural and non-arbitrary, rather than gerrymandered or artificial. This would rule out the previous example since the ordering of the numerals beginning ‘1’, ‘2’, ‘3’, ‘4’, ‘5’ ... and so on is arbitrary and non-natural, except for the naturalness it inherits from the naturalness of the consecutive ordering of the numbers those numerals represent. The ordering of the positions of a clock’s hand from  $0^\circ$  through to  $359^\circ$ , in contrast, seems relatively natural, since it reflects the relative locations of the hand’s various positions.

Continuous correlation is neither necessary nor sufficient for a symbol system to be depictive. Continuous correlation is not sufficient because it fails to exclude symbol systems such as the clock, which meets the condition of continuous correlation, since for every time which is between two other times, the position of the hand on the clock which represents that time is between the positions of the clock which represent the two other times. Since the symbol system of the clock is not a depictive symbol system, continuous correlation is insufficient for depiction. Given this problem, continuous correlation also seems unlikely to be sufficient in combination with other conditions.

Nor is continuous correlation a necessary condition of depiction. Consider the depictive symbol system used to mark toilets as male, female or disabled by using a picture of a man, a woman and a wheelchair. It is obvious that none of the three symbols are between the other two as well as that wheelchairs are not between men and women (except when someone pushes a person of the opposite gender in a wheelchair), men are not between women and wheelchairs and women are not between men and wheelchairs. The symbol system used to mark toilets as male, female and disabled is depictive but not continuously correlated, so continuous correlation cannot be a necessary condition of depiction.

#### 4.8 Conclusion

I have discussed six syntactic and semantic properties which are plausibly necessary, sufficient or jointly necessary and sufficient for a symbol system to be depictive. None of syntactic density, semantic density, relative repleteness, syntactic sensitivity nor continuous correlation are necessary for a symbol system to be depictive. Nor is any combination of syntactic density, semantic density, relative repleteness, syntactic sensitivity, continuous correlation or transparency jointly sufficient for a symbol system to be depictive. Despite their ingenuity, necessary and sufficient conditions for depiction were not delivered by any of the proposed syntactic and semantic conditions.

But this does not show that a successful analysis cannot be supplied by similar syntactic

or semantic properties. The six conditions discussed in this chapter are just some of the many possibilities that ingenuity may construct. Furthermore, it is open for proponents of structural definitions of depiction to argue that the examples I have given are misdescribed: it may be argued, for example, that the symbol system of chess diagrams is actually not depictive, or that the symbol system in which letters represent themselves actually is depictive. So although the arguments I have given may be successful in detail, they do not secure the conclusion that a structural definition of depiction is impossible in principle.

Nevertheless, I want to conclude by suggesting that there is a principled objection which shows that no definition of depiction as a kind of symbol system can succeed, no matter what syntactic and semantic properties of symbol systems are specified. For depiction to be a kind of symbol system it is not enough that there exist functions from depictions to their extensions – that much is trivial. Rather, some of those functions must also be systematically related to the practice of communication. There is a systematic relation, for example, between the function which takes chess diagrams to the positions they represent and the practice of using those diagrams in order to illustrate games of chess. If depiction is a kind of symbol system, then all depictions should belong to symbol systems like this.

So not every symbol system – function from characters to extensions – in the abstract is a symbol system in use – a function from characters to extensions which is systematically related to a practice of communication.<sup>43</sup> And while it is trivial that all depictions belong to symbol systems in the abstract – it is trivial that there exist functions from depictions to what they represent – it is false that all depictions belong to symbol systems in use – functions from characters to extensions which are used in communication. Although, for example, the function from chess diagrams to what they

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<sup>43</sup> For the corresponding distinction between languages in the abstract and languages in use see, for example, Davies (1981, 6-26), Lewis (1975), Peacocke (1987) and Schiffer (1993).

represent is used in the illustration of chess diagrams, the function from improvised sketches to what they depict does not belong to any such practice: improvised sketches are produced ad hoc, rather than in systematic accordance with a mathematical function.

If depiction is not a kind of symbol system at all, then no definition of depiction in terms of the syntactic and semantic properties of symbol systems can succeed. In terms of the distinction drawn at the beginning of this essay, questions about the nature of depiction are not descriptive questions about the syntax and semantic questions of pictures, but foundational questions about how depiction is mediated. This suggests that depiction should be defined, not by focusing on descriptive questions about the syntax and semantics of pictures, but on foundational questions about how depiction is mediated. From this perspective, the platitude that depictive representation is mediated by resemblance is a better starting point than intuitions about structure for the project of defining depiction.

The aim of the next two chapters is to develop these points in more detail. I begin by adapting David Lewis' analysis of when a language in the abstract is a population's language of use to give an analysis of when a symbol system is used by a population in a way which is depictive. This analysis has the virtue that it both undermines an argument of Goodman's against the platitude that depiction is mediated by resemblance on the grounds that depictions belong to symbol systems by showing that Goodman confuses foundational and descriptive questions about depictive representation and also provides an argument that not all depictions belong to symbol systems, which is sufficient to show that definitions of depiction in terms of the syntactic and semantic properties of symbol systems cannot succeed.

# 5 Depiction and Convention

Goodman attempts to undermine the platitude that depiction is mediated by resemblance by defining both depiction and description as kinds of symbol system. From the claim that depiction is a kind of symbol system, Goodman draws the conclusion that “Almost any picture may represent almost anything; that is, given picture and object there is usually a system of representation, a plan of correlation, under which the picture represents that object.” (Goodman, 1968, 38). Because they are both kinds of symbol system, Goodman argues, it follows that depiction and description are equally arbitrary.

Goodman’s position is interesting because he draws an extremely close analogy between depictive and descriptive representation. The moral that can be drawn from my discussion of his views in this chapter is that it is possible to uphold such a strong analogy between the two kinds of representation, while still maintaining the platitude that whereas descriptive representation is mediated by convention, depictive representation is mediated by resemblance. So Goodman’s insights about the relationship between depiction and description can be accepted, but without drawing the counterintuitive consequences that he attempts to draw.

Section 5.1 explains the argument which suggests to Goodman that depiction being a kind of symbol system is incompatible with depiction being mediated by resemblance. Section 5.2 parodies that argument using an analogous argument which purports to show that linguistic representation is not conventional. Sections 5.3 and 5.4 develop the analogy between depiction and description by adapting Lewis’ analysis of the role of convention in linguistic representation into an analogous analysis of the role of resemblance in depictive symbol systems. The analysis shows how the fact that depictions belong to symbol systems can be reconciled with the platitude that depiction is mediated by resemblance.

## 5.1 Arbitrariness

Since a function is any mapping, no matter how arbitrary, between two sets, the definition of symbol systems as functions from characters to extensions brings out the consequence that any depiction may represent anything in some symbol system or other. There is a function from portraits to people, for example, that takes the Mona Lisa to Socrates, and so it follows that there is a symbol system in which the Mona Lisa represents Socrates. Just as words represent other things in other languages, pictures depict other things in other symbol systems, so what a depiction represents appears to depend not on what it resembles but on its extension relative to a symbol system.

So if depiction is a kind of symbol system, then any depiction, just like any word, may represent anything relative to some symbol system. Goodman draws the conclusion that depictive representation is like descriptive representation in being arbitrary. As he puts it, “Descriptions are distinguished from depictions not through being more arbitrary ... for what describes in some symbol systems may depict in others. Resemblance disappears as a criterion of representation...” (Goodman, 1968, 230-1). So if, as Goodman claims, depiction is a kind of symbol system, then depictive representation appears to be both arbitrary and unmediated by resemblance.

There is an obvious lacuna in this argument. Even if it follows from the definition of symbol systems that any picture may represent anything, it does not follow that any picture may depict anything, since the alternative symbol systems relative to which characters possess other extensions may lack the syntactic and semantic properties required for being depictive. So although, for example, there is a symbol system in which the Mona Lisa represents Socrates instead of Lisa, that symbol system may not be a depictive one, in which case the fact that there is a symbol system in which the Mona Lisa represents Socrates would not show that the Mona Lisa’s depiction of Socrates is arbitrary.

Furthermore, there seems to be little obstacle in principle to combining Goodman’s thesis that depiction is a kind of symbol system with the thesis that depictions resemble



what they represent, or any other thesis which maintains that the relationship between depictions and what they represent is non-arbitrary. As Dominic Lopes writes, “The claim that pictures are symbols in this [Goodman’s] sense is not incompatible with perceptual explanations of depiction. Nothing in the symbol model rules out pictures being correlated with, and standing for, their subjects because they resemble them... A theory of depiction may, without inconsistency, explain pictures as both symbolic and perceptual.” (Lopes, 1996, 57).

For example, the following analysis of depictive symbol systems, which suggests that resemblance between characters and extensions is the property required for a symbol system to be depictive, is attractive:

- (13) A symbol system is depictive if and only if every character in that symbol system resembles its extension.

So the symbol system of maps, for example, is supposed by this analysis to be depictive because every map resembles the terrain it represents in that symbol system. If this analysis is right, then it seems plausible that the definition of depiction as a kind of symbol system establishes neither that depiction is arbitrary nor that it is unmediated by resemblance.

But the following example shows that this analysis cannot be right. Often, letters of the alphabet are used to represent themselves, so that ‘a’ represents ‘a’, ‘b’ represents ‘b’, ‘c’ represents ‘c’, and so on. Since resemblance is reflexive, every letter in this symbol system resembles and represents itself, but it is intuitively not the case that every letter in the symbol system depicts itself, or that the symbol system described is depictive. The letters’ resemblance to themselves is incidental to their representation of themselves: even if, for example, capital letters were used to represent lower case letters, so that the letters failed to resemble what they represent, the kind of representation would be the same.

In the following sections, I will exploit an analogy between symbol systems and languages which shows how to resolve this problem. Even if one thinks, as Lopes does,

that the compatibility of the thesis that depiction is a kind of symbol system with the platitude that depiction is mediated by resemblance is obvious, the analogy is still interesting because, as well as showing how the two theses are compatible, it also provides a diagnosis of why Goodman and others may have thought them to be incompatible. In particular, I will argue that Goodman overlooked the distinction between languages in the abstract and languages in use, or between foundational and descriptive issues in the study of representation.

## 5.2 Languages

Just as a symbol system is a function from characters to extensions, it is plausible that a language is a function from sentences to truth-conditions.<sup>44</sup> So, for example, the meaning of ‘Snow is white’ in English is that snow is white, according to the definition, because English is a function from sentences to truth-conditions that takes the sentence ‘Snow is white’ to the condition of snow’s being white. Similarly, ‘Grass is green’ means grass is green in English because ‘Grass is green’ is taken by the function to the condition of grass’ being green. This section draws out the parallels between this definition of languages and Goodman’s definition of symbol systems.

The main advantage of defining languages as functions from sentences to truth-conditions, as for defining symbol systems as functions from characters to extensions, is that every language can be fully specified using such a function. English, for example, is fully specified by the function that takes ‘Snow is white’ to the state of affairs of snow’s being white, ‘Grass is green’ to the state of affairs of grass’ being green, and so on. Once the relevant function from sentences to truth-conditions is specified, there is no further question about what the sentences of the language specified by that function mean.

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<sup>44</sup> See, for example, Lewis (1975). See Davidson (1967) for the thesis that the meaning of a sentence is its truth-condition.

Since truth-conditions are the extensions of sentences and sentences are the characters of languages, this definition of languages is just a special case of Goodman's definition of symbol systems. This brings out another advantage of Goodman's position: the definition of symbol systems is a natural generalisation of the definition of languages, and the definition of depiction as a kind of symbol system is a natural analogue of the definition of languages as functions from sentences to truth-conditions.<sup>45</sup> This is the analogy between depiction and language which, while disagreeing with most of the conclusions Goodman draws from it, I want to agree with Goodman in upholding.

Just as it may appear to follow from the claim that depiction is a kind of symbol system that depictive representation is arbitrary and not mediated by resemblance, it may appear to follow from the definition of languages as functions from sentences to truth-conditions that linguistic representation is not mediated by convention. The problem is that a function from sentences to truth-conditions necessarily takes the sentences it does to the truth-conditions it does: just as the function of doubling necessarily takes two to four, the function from English sentences to the states of affairs they represent, for example, necessarily takes the sentence 'Snow is white' to the state of affairs of snow's being white.

In general, if sentences necessarily mean what they do in a language, then it appears that no convention could link sentences to what they mean, and so it appears that convention has no role in fixing their meaning. If 'Snow is white', for example, necessarily means in English that snow is white, then no convention is needed to link the two. If languages are functions from sentences to truth-conditions, then having a convention that 'Snow is white' means that snow is white in English is like having a convention to the effect that falling objects must accelerate at approximately ten metres per second per second: clearly, the acceleration of falling objects is independent of any convention which may purport to govern it.

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<sup>45</sup> Lopes (1996, 59) points out the connection between the definitions of languages and symbol systems.

But to conclude on these grounds that convention has no role in linguistic representation would be obviously incorrect. This is because, while it is a matter of necessity rather than convention that ‘Snow is white’ in English means that snow is white, it is contingent that English, or the language given by the function from English sentences to their truth-conditions, is the language of this continent, and this is a fact which plausibly governed by linguistic conventions. It is a mistake to infer from the fact that sentences have their truth-conditions in a language necessarily that linguistic representation is not mediated by convention.

In general, while the meaning of a sentence in a language is always a matter of necessity, it is always a contingent matter whether a language or a function from sentences to truth-conditions is used or spoken by a population. So although it is a matter of necessity, for example, that ‘Snow is white’ means that snow is white in English, it is nonetheless an arbitrary matter that we speak a language in which ‘Snow is white’ means that snow is white rather than a different language in which it means that grass is green. Convention does not govern what a sentence means within a language, but it does govern which language amongst the infinite number of possibilities is spoken by a population.<sup>46</sup>

The moral of this point is to distinguish between the study of languages in use and languages in the abstract. The study of languages in the abstract focuses on the study of languages as abstract mathematical objects such as functions from sentences to truth-conditions and investigates further questions about the structure of those objects. The study of language in use focuses, in contrast, on how those abstract mathematical objects are connected with concrete speakers and interpreters. The study of convention is part of this latter study: the role of convention is to determine which languages in the abstract are adopted by speakers and interpreters as their language of use.

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<sup>46</sup> These points are from Lewis (1969; 1975).

There is an analogous distinction between symbol systems in use and symbol systems in the abstract. The fact that any depiction may depict anything in some symbol system or another is a mathematical fact about the nature of symbol systems in the abstract. Nothing follows from this fact about the nature of symbol systems in use, since it does not follow that the choice between which symbol systems in the abstract are adopted for use is an arbitrary one. The platitude that depiction is mediated by resemblance should not be interpreted – as was suggested in the last section – as a descriptive thesis about the abstract mathematical nature of depictive symbol systems, but as a foundational thesis about how symbol systems in the abstract become symbol systems in use.

So if the platitude that resemblance plays a similar role in depictive representation as convention plays in linguistic representation is right, then this suggests that the role of resemblance in depictive representation might be in non-arbitrarily determining which symbol systems a population uses. If this suggestion is right, then the difference between depictive and other symbol systems is not in the abstract mathematical syntactic and semantic properties of symbol systems, but in the way that depictive symbol systems are connected to the populations which use them. The following sections attempt to confirm this suggestion by providing an analysis of depictive symbol systems analogous to Lewis' analysis of conventional language.

### 5.3 Convention

This section introduces Lewis' analysis of linguistic conventions; the next section adapts it to provide an analysis of depictive symbol systems. A convention is a rationally self-perpetuating regularity in behaviour. Driving on the left, for example, is a convention in Australia because there is a regularity of driving on the left in Australia and because the existence of this regularity provides Australian drivers with a rational reason for continuing to drive on the left. Driving on the right is a convention in Europe because

there is a regularity of driving on the right in Europe, and the existence of this regularity gives European drivers a rational reason for continuing to drive on the right.<sup>47</sup>

To have a convention of driving on the left it must be, firstly, that there is a regularity of driving on the left and, secondly, that drivers are aware that there is a regularity of driving on the left and, thirdly, that drivers have a reason to drive on the left on condition that the others do. This is because if any of these conditions failed then the regularity of driving on the left would not be rationally self-perpetuating: drivers would not continue driving on the left in the first case because it would not be better to do so, in the second case because they would not know that it was better to do so and in the third case because others driving on the left would not give them any reason to do so.

These points suggest the following formulation of Lewis' (1969, 58) analysis of convention, which is that:

- (14) A regularity in the behaviour of a group is a convention if and only if:
  - a. everyone conforms to that regularity
  - b. everyone expects everyone else to conform to that regularity
  - c. everyone has reason to conform on condition that everyone else conforms.

So, for example, driving on the left is a convention in Australia because everybody drives on the left, everybody expects everybody else to drive on the left, and everybody has reason to drive on the left if everybody else drives on the left.

Three amendments. Firstly, imagine that everyone drives on the left because they expect others to and because everybody has reason to drive on the same side as others. However, nobody believes that others drive on the left for these reasons: rather everyone

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<sup>47</sup> This section summarizes Lewis (1969; 1975). See Bennett (1971) for connections between Lewis' analysis of convention and Goodman's analysis of depiction. See also Abell (2005b), Hopkins (2003b), Lopes (1996, 132-5), Novitz (1977) and Schier (1986, 153-7) for discussion of Lewis' analysis of convention in relation to depiction in general.

believes that others drive on the left merely out of habit or because driving on the left is more scenic. The regularity of driving on the left is not a convention in this population for avoiding collision, since members of the population would continue driving on the left even though they believe others may not care about collision (Lewis, 1969, 59).

To avoid this case it is necessary to build into the analysis that all the members of the population are aware that all the conditions of the analysis are fulfilled. So according to the amended analysis:

- (15) A regularity in the behaviour of group is a convention if and only if:
- a. everyone conforms to that regularity
  - b. everyone has reason to conform on condition that everyone else conforms
  - c. *everyone believes (a)-(c).*

So, for example, driving on the left is a convention in Australia because everybody drives on the left, everybody prefers to drive on the left given that everybody else drives on the left and because everybody believes that everybody else conforms to the regularity for these reasons.<sup>48</sup>

Secondly, the condition that everyone has reason to conform on condition that others do is supposed to capture the cooperativeness of convention, since in conventional behaviour everyone has reason to conform to the same regularity because of their common interests. The convention of driving on the left in Australia, for example, arises because everybody has a common interest in driving on the same side, and this common interest gives them a reason to conform to the regularity of driving on the left if others do. All conventions are similarly based on such common interests (Lewis, 1969, 69).

But the conditions of analysis (15) may be met even when common interests are absent. Imagine a workplace in which everyone aims to impress their employer by outperforming their peers. A regularity of hard work obtains in this workplace, everybody has reason to conform to the regularity of hard work on condition that everyone else

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<sup>48</sup> Lewis' version of the analysis requires common rather than self-reflexive belief.

does, and everybody is aware of this. Nevertheless, hard work is not a convention of the workplace, because the workers do not have a common interest in everybody working hard.

To address this problem it is necessary to build into the analysis a condition stipulating that everybody has a common interest in general, rather than merely partial, conformity to the regularity (Lewis, 1975, 165). So according to the amended analysis:

- (16) A regularity in the behaviour of a group is a convention if and only if:
- a. everyone conforms to that regularity
  - b. everyone has reason to conform on condition that everyone else conforms
  - c. *everyone prefers everyone to conform, on condition that most do*
  - d. everyone believes (a)-(d).

So driving on the left, for example, is a convention because everyone prefers everyone to drive on the left if most do, since everyone driving on the left will tend to reduce accidents if most people drive on the left.

Thirdly, the condition that everybody has reason to conform because others do is supposed to capture the arbitrariness of convention, since everyone is supposed to conform to the regularity for no other reason than that others do. The convention of driving on the left, for example, is supposed to be arbitrary because nobody has much reason to drive on the left except the fact that others drive on the left. The regularity of driving on the left is no better than the regularity of driving on the right, which everyone would happily adopt were it adopted by others.

But the condition does not guarantee arbitrariness in all cases. Suppose, for example, that there is only one café in our town and that it is a regularity in our behaviour to meet at that café to drink coffee. We only like to drink coffee together, so that I have reason to go to the café only if you go to the café. Nevertheless, because there is no alternative place for us to drink coffee our regularity of meeting at the café is not chosen arbitrarily but of necessity, and because it is not chosen arbitrarily, it is not correctly classified as a convention.



To address this problem the analysis has to be amended to ensure that an alternative regularity is available. So according to the final amended analysis (Lewis, 1969, 76; 1975, 165):

- (17) A regularity in behaviour of a group is a convention if and only if:
- a. everyone conforms to that regularity
  - b. everyone has reason to conform on condition that everyone else conforms
  - c. *there is an alternative regularity which everyone would have had reason to conform to if others had conformed to it*
  - d. everyone prefers everyone to conform, on condition that most do
  - e. everyone believes (a)-(e).

So, for example, driving on the left would not be a convention if it weren't for the existence of the option of driving on the right, which everyone else would have reason to do if others did.

As I argued in the last section, language is conventional in the sense that conventions determine which languages or functions from sentences to truth-conditions are used by people in speech and communication. Convention, for example, determines that English, the function from English sentences to their truth-conditions, rather than Liarese, a function from English sentences to the contrary truth-conditions, is a language spoken on the continent of Australia.

Since conventions apply primarily to regularities of behaviour, the analysis of convention can not apply directly to functions from sentences to truth-conditions, but only to a regularity in behaviour concerning those functions. Lewis suggests that the relevant regularity is truthfulness in the language, which consists in trying to sometimes utter sentences of the language when and only when the truth-conditions or states of affairs they represent in that language obtain.

So being truthful in English, for example, consists in sometimes uttering sentences such as 'Snow is white' if snow is white and abstaining from uttering sentences such as 'The

sky is green' if the sky is not green, whereas being truthful in Liarese, the function from English sentences to the contraries of their truth-conditions in English, consists in abstaining from uttering sentences such as 'Snow is white' when snow is white and uttering sentence such as 'The sky is green' when the sky is not green.

Lewis (1969, 177; 1975, 167-8) suggests that a group has a convention of using a language if and only if they have a convention of truthfulness in that language or, putting this together with the full analysis of convention, that:

- (18) A group has a convention of using a language if and only if there is a regularity in the group such that:
- a. everyone is truthful in that language
  - b. everyone has reason to be truthful in that language on condition that everyone else is truthful in that language
  - c. there is an alternative regularity of truthfulness in another language which everyone would have reason to conform to if others did
  - d. everyone prefers everyone to conform to a regularity of truthfulness in that language on condition that most do
  - e. everyone believes (a)-(e).

English, for example, is a language spoken by English speakers since English speakers are truthful in English, English speakers expect all other English speakers to be truthful in English, and all English speakers prefers to be truthful in English given that everybody else is.

#### 5.4 Depictive Symbol Systems

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. That suggests that the role of resemblance in depictive representation is analogous to the role of convention in linguistic representation, so that substituting symbol systems for languages in Lewis' analysis of conventional language use and adding that which

symbol systems are used is not arbitrary but depends on the resemblance between their characters and extensions should provide an analysis of depictive symbol systems.

Arbitrariness is ensured in the analysis of convention by the second condition, which ensures that the population conforms to the regularity for no other reason than that other members of the population conform to it, and by the third condition, which ensures that there are other regularities which all members would have preferred to conform to had others done so. To adapt Lewis' analysis of the conventions governing linguistic representation in order to provide an analysis of depictive symbol systems, these are the conditions that ought to be altered.

The second condition of Lewis' analysis captures the arbitrariness of linguistic conventions by specifying that which language the members of a population have reason to use depends on which language other members of that population choose to use, rather than any feature of the language independent of the choices of others (Lewis, 1969, 70). To provide an analysis of depictive symbol systems, this condition should be altered to include resemblance, because the resemblance of a symbol system's characters to their extensions in that symbol system provides an additional reason for its use.

The third condition of Lewis' analysis further ensures the arbitrariness of linguistic conventions by specifying that there must be an alternative to the regularity members of the population actually conform to which would serve their purposes just as well. Since the relationship between depictions and what they represent is non-arbitrary, this condition becomes unnecessary and should be dropped: although there may be alternative regularities which would serve just as well, there need not be such alternatives in order for the use of a symbol system to count as depictive.

This suggests the following analysis of when a symbol system is depictive:

- (19) A symbol system is depictive if and only if there is a regularity of truthfulness in that symbol system such that:
  - a. everyone is truthful in that symbol system

- b. everyone has reason to be truthful in that symbol system, *since its characters resemble their extensions*
- c. everyone prefers everyone to conform to a regularity of truthfulness in that symbol system on condition that most do
- d. everyone believes (a)-(d).

So, for example, the symbol system of maps is depictive because everybody uses them, everybody expects everybody to use them, and everybody has reason to do this because maps resemble what they represent, rather than simply because everybody else uses them.

Two clarifications. First, the definition of truthfulness in a language cannot be straightforwardly applied to symbol systems, since symbol systems are functions from characters to extensions rather than truth-conditions and extensions need not be true or false. One cannot be truthful in the symbol system of Arabic numerals, for example, since the extensions of the numerals in the system are numbers, which exist or not rather than obtaining or being true or false.

The solution lies in observing that depiction is of states of affairs as well as objects. The Mona Lisa, for example, does not merely depict Lisa but also the state of affairs of Lisa smiling. Similarly, depictions resemble states of affairs as well as objects: the Mona Lisa does not merely resemble Lisa (the object), but also resembles Lisa smiling (the state of affairs). So the difficulty can be overcome by applying the analysis first towards the depiction of states of affairs and then stipulating that an object is depicted if and only if it occurs in a depicted state of affairs.<sup>49</sup>

Second, both the analysis of conventional language and depictive symbol systems have to be altered to accommodate non-assertoric utterances, though there is a surprising disanalogy in the amendments required. The analysis of language as a function from sentences to truth-conditions is inadequate to mark differences between moods. The

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<sup>49</sup> I argue for this in more detail in Section 7.4

sentences ‘Put the cat on the mat’ and ‘The cat is on the mat’, for example, have the same truth-condition. But their meanings in English are different, since the first is a command and the second is a statement.

The solution is to redefine languages as functions from sentences to ordered pairs of moods and truth-conditions. So English, for example, is defined as a function which takes ‘The cat is on the mat’ to the ordered pair of the indicative mood and the condition of the cat being on the mat and takes ‘Put the cat on the mat’ to the ordered pair of the imperative mood and the same condition. So the analysis of language can be easily amended to cope with the omission of moods.

As a result of this revision, the definition of truthfulness in a language also has to be revised. Truthfulness must be altered from merely uttering a sentence when its truth-condition obtains to sometimes uttering sentences in the indicative mood when one intends to get one’s audience to believe that the truth-conditions obtain and the imperative when one wants one’s audience to make the truth-conditions obtain. The revisions of the definitions of languages and of truthfulness allows the accommodation of the imperative mood, and other moods can be accommodated by analogous revisions.

But the definition of symbol systems need not be altered to include moods to apply to depiction. This is because, while some pictures are intended to produce beliefs and others actions, this difference is not marked in the syntactic structure of the pictures in the way that the intended force of the utterance of a sentence is marked using the mood of the sentence. Differences in mood are syntactic differences between sentences used as *prima facie* markers of the intended force of a sentence. There are no corresponding syntactic differences between depictions.

For example, there is no difference corresponding to mood, since there is no syntactic difference at all, between the picture of a Lego castle on the front of the Lego box which tells you how the Lego will look when it is built and the picture of the Lego castle contained in the Lego instructions which tells you where to put the final bricks to

complete the castle. Although the first depiction is designed to induce belief and the second is designed to induce action, this difference in force is not marked by a syntactic difference in mood.<sup>50</sup>

However, the fact that some depictions are used to produce action rather than belief does require a revision of the definition of truthfulness used in the analysis of depictive symbol systems. The definition of truthfulness says that someone is truthful in a symbol system if and only if they sometimes perpetrate characters in that symbol system when their state of affairs in that symbol system obtains. This definition only allows for depictions which are intended to produce beliefs: Lego instructions, for example, are not perpetrated only after the Lego is actually built.

So the definition of truthfulness in a symbol system has to be revised. Truthfulness in a symbol system is not, according to the revision, merely perpetrating characters in the symbol system when one believes that the corresponding states of affairs obtain, but also perpetrating the characters in the symbol system when one desires the corresponding states of affairs to obtain. So, for example, a picture of Lego may be perpetrated both when one believes something about the Lego and when one desires the Lego to be arranged in a certain way.

## 5.5 Conclusion

The analysis of depictive symbol systems given here supports the analogy between languages and depictive symbol systems, but undermines both Goodman's definition of depiction in terms of the syntactic and semantic properties of symbol systems and his argument that depictive representation is arbitrary and unmediated by resemblance. It

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<sup>50</sup> See Wittgenstein: "Imagine a picture representing a boxer in a particular stance. Now, this picture can be used to tell someone how he should stand, should hold himself; or how he should not hold himself; or how a particular man did stand in such-and-such a place; and so on." (1953, 11)

appeared to follow, for example, that depiction could not be characterized in terms of resemblance because there was no non-incidental role for resemblance in depictive representation. But the analysis shows that there is a non-incidental role for resemblance, since resemblance between characters and extensions of a symbol system determines which symbol systems are adopted for use.

The symbol system of using letters to represent themselves, for example, is not counted as depictive because although all the characters in that symbol system resemble their extensions, it is not for this reason that this symbol system is preferred over others as a method of representing the letters. If, on the other hand, the symbol system of using letters to represent themselves was preferred due to their resemblance to themselves, it seems it would count as a depictive symbol system. So this analysis, unlike its predecessor, accommodates this example.

Furthermore, the analysis shows that it does not follow from depiction being a kind of symbol system that the relationship between depictions and what they represent is merely arbitrary. While it is true that there are always other symbol systems in which the same pictures would have different extensions, which symbol system is selected for use in communication is not arbitrary but depends on the resemblance between the characters and extensions of that system just as, while it is true that sentences have their meaning in English necessarily, linguistic meaning is not a matter of necessity since which language is spoken depends on arbitrary conventions.

So the extremely close analogy between depictive and descriptive modes of representation Goodman draws by defining depiction as a kind of symbol system turns out to be correct. In his words: “The often stressed distinction between iconic and other signs becomes transient and trivial; thus does heresy breed iconoclasm.” (1968, 231). But I have also argued that the counterintuitive consequences Goodman draws from this analogy do not follow: in particular, the platitude that depictions are connected to what they represent via resemblance whereas words are connected to what they represent only arbitrarily is preserved.

# 6 Symbol Systems

The claim that depiction should be defined as a kind of symbol system is difficult to adjudicate, because it is trivially true that there is a function which maps every depiction to the state of affairs it represents. But the distinction between symbol systems in use and symbol systems in the abstract makes adjudicating this claim easier, because while it is trivial that all depictions belong to symbol systems in the abstract, it is not trivial whether all depictions belong to symbol systems in use. In this chapter, I argue against Goodman and Kulvicki's claim that depiction should be defined as a kind of symbol system by arguing that not all depictions belong to symbol systems in use.

In Section 6.1 I argue that not all depictions meet the conditions of the analysis of depictive symbol systems in use given in the last chapter. In Section 6.2 I argue that not all depictions belong to symbol systems in use which are mediated by convention either. In Section 6.3 I address the objection that my arguments are too strong because they also undermine Lewis' analysis of conventional language. In Section 6.4 I argue that all depictive symbols – or members of depictive symbol systems in use – are depictions in the sense defined in Chapter 2. This supports defining depiction by combining resemblance with Grice's analysis rather than defining depiction as a kind of symbol system.

## 6.1 Depiction is not a kind of Symbol System

Many depictions belong to depictive symbol systems in the sense defined in the last chapter. Maps, for example, belong to a depictive symbol system, since amongst surveyors there is a regularity of truthfulness in the symbol system of maps, the fact that maps resemble their state of affairs in that symbol system gives surveyors a reason to conform to that regularity, and all surveyors are aware of all these facts. The resemblance between maps and what they represent is a reason for surveyors to conform



to the regularity, because all surveyors desire to conform to a system in which the symbols are readily interpreted by other surveyors.

But not all depictions belong to depictive symbol systems. Suppose, for example, that Philomela's only motive is to exact revenge on Tereus for cutting out her tongue. In order to do so, she weaves a tapestry depicting his crime. Trivially, there are many functions from characters to extensions that take Philomela's tapestry to Tereus' crimes. I will argue that since none of those functions need meet all four of the conditions of being a depictive symbol system, Philomela's tapestry is a depiction that does not belong to a depictive symbol system. And since not all depictions belong to depictive symbol systems, depiction is not a kind of symbol system.

The first condition of the analysis requires a regularity of truthfulness in a symbol system. Philomela's tapestry meets this condition; there is a regularity of truthfulness, for example, in the function that takes Philomela's tapestry to Tereus' crimes and the Bayeux tapestry to the Battle of Hastings. But if, for example, the Bayeux tapestry and every other depiction apart from Philomela's tapestry had not existed, Philomela's tapestry would have depicted Tereus' crimes without belonging to any regularity of truthfulness. So it is not the case that all depictions must meet the first condition of belonging to a depictive symbol system.

The second condition requires that the resemblance of characters to extensions in a symbol system gives everyone reason to be truthful in that symbol system. Because her only motive is revenge on Tereus, Philomela has no general reason to conform to a regularity of truthfulness. She has no reason, for example, to perpetrate the Bayeux tapestry when the Battle of Hastings occurs, so she has no general reason for being truthful in the symbol system which takes her tapestry to Tereus' crimes and the Bayeux tapestry to the Battle of Hastings.

The third condition requires that everybody prefers everybody to conform to a regularity of truthfulness in the symbol system if most do. But if Philomela's only motive is

revenge, then it seems that she will be indifferent to whether anybody else conforms to a regularity of truthfulness in any symbol system, including in the symbol systems that takes her tapestry to Tereus' crimes and the Bayeux tapestry to the Battle of Hastings. But despite not meeting the third condition of belonging to a symbol system, Philomela's tapestry is a depiction, so the third condition of belonging to a symbol system is not met by all depictions.

Since it need not meet the first three conditions, Philomela's tapestry need not meet the fourth either. The fourth condition requires that everyone in a population believes that the first three obtain. So Philomela's tapestry could remain a depiction without meeting the fourth condition, if, for example, anybody in the population falsely believed that the tapestry did not belong to any regularity of truthfulness, because there were no other depictions, or if anybody in the population rightly believed that Philomela had no general reason to conform to a regularity of truthfulness, because her only motive is to exact revenge on Tereus.

So some depictions, such as maps or architectural plans, belong to depictive symbol systems whereas others, such as Philomela's tapestry or improvised sketches, do not. If I am right that depictive symbol systems are those which are used because their characters resemble their extensions, then Goodman is wrong that all depictions belong to depictive symbol systems. It follows that Goodman is incorrect to define depiction as a kind of symbol system. In the next section, I will use the same arguments to show that even if depictive symbol systems are mediated by convention instead of by resemblance, it still follows that not all depictions belong to symbol systems in use, and so Goodman and Kulvicki are wrong to define depiction as a kind of symbol system.

## 6.2 Depiction and Convention

I argued in the last section against Goodman's thesis that depiction is a kind of symbol system by giving examples of depictions that don't belong to depictive symbol systems. In this section, I want to respond to the objection that these are not counterexamples to

the thesis that depiction is a kind of symbol system, but counterexamples to my analysis of depictive symbol systems in terms of resemblance. Instead of showing that depiction is not a kind of symbol system, it might be argued, the examples show that depictive symbol systems are symbol systems in use which are mediated by convention rather than by resemblance.

The view that depictive representation is conventional is advocated by John Bennett (1971), who argues that Goodman's claim that depiction is a kind of symbol system should be combined with Lewis' analysis of convention in order to capture the conventionalist aspect of Goodman's position. A similar position is suggested by remarks of Goodman's such as that "Realist representation, in brief, depends ... upon inculcation" (1968, 38). The objection which I am considering is that by taking depictive symbol systems to be mediated by resemblance, I have begged the question against the position that depictive representation is conventional and so failed to establish the conclusion that not all depictions belong to symbol systems in use.

However, the examples I gave in the last section to show that depiction is not a kind of symbol system can also be used to show that depiction is not mediated by convention, so the position of Bennett and perhaps Goodman fails to avoid the argument that depiction is not a kind of symbol system. Furthermore, the position that all depictions belong to symbol systems in use which are mediated by convention is open to an additional objection, which corresponds to an additional clause belonging to the analysis of convention applied to depictive symbol systems: there is not always an alternative regularity of truthfulness in a symbol system which is equally as good as the regularity of truthfulness actually adopted.

The first clause of the analysis of convention, which requires conformity to a regularity such as truthfulness in a symbol system, is easily met as long as there is more than one depiction. There is a regularity of truthfulness, for example, in the symbol system which takes Philomela's tapestry to Tereus' crimes and the Bayeux tapestry to the Battle of Hastings. However, it is also possible that no depiction existed apart from Philomela's

tapestry, in which case Philomela's tapestry wouldn't have failed to be a depiction, despite not meeting the first condition of the analysis of convention. So the first condition of the analysis of convention is not a necessary condition of depiction.

Similarly, depictions may fail to meet the second clause of the analysis of convention, just as they may fail the second clause of the analysis of depictive symbol systems. Although Philomela has a reason to perpetrate her tapestry, she does not have a reason to conform to a regularity of truthfulness in any symbol system just in case others do: Philomela will perpetrate her tapestry regardless of what others do. Even if everyone else, for example, prefers communication only with their tongues, Philomela, since she has no tongue, will still have reason to perpetrate her tapestry rather than conform to the same regularity as the others.

Similarly, depictions may fail to meet the fourth clause of the analysis of convention. A regularity of truthfulness in some symbol system may fail to be conventional because although everyone in the population has reason to conform to that regularity just in case others do, they may still all prefer that the others do not conform to that regularity. Every painter, for example, may prefer that he or she is the only painter, in which case all painters would conform to a regularity of truthfulness in a symbol system of painting, but would nevertheless prefer that other painters do not conform to that regularity.

The analysis of conventions has an additional clause not shared by the analysis of depictive symbol systems: it requires that there be an alternative symbol system in which a regularity of truthfulness would serve those who conformed to it just as well as a regularity of truthfulness in the symbol system actually adopted does. This clause provides an additional way in which depiction need not be conventional, since the resemblance of characters to their extensions in depictive symbol systems may mean

that there is no alternative symbol system in which truthfulness would serve just as well.<sup>51</sup>

Globes representing the Earth, for example, seem to belong to a regularity of truthfulness in a symbol system which lacks any alternative with the same benefits. Mercator projections, for instance, are not as good as globes because they inevitably distort the Earth's shape by making the poles seem larger than they actually are; other methods of projection produce other distortions. Any globe, of course, could be replaced by a slightly larger or smaller globe, but that replacement would not amount to a change in the symbol system being used but just to another representation in the same system. So depictions and depictive symbol systems need not be conventional in the same way that language must.

Finally, depictions may fail to meet the fifth clause of the analysis of convention. Imagine a population of dull painters, who all try to paint just like the others because they all loathe originality. The painters have reason to conform to the regularity that they do only if others conform to the same regularity and they prefer general conformity, because they loathe originality in others as much as in themselves. Nevertheless, the regularity need not be conventional since, although the painters all conform to this regularity and have reason to conform to it on condition that the others do, the painters may all falsely believe that the other painters are incapable of originality rather than adverse to it.

It follows that not all depictions belong to symbol systems in use, regardless of whether symbol systems in use are defined in terms of convention or resemblance, since not all depictions meet the conditions of either analysis. It also follows that a definition of depiction in terms of the syntactic and semantic properties of symbol systems cannot succeed in principle, because regardless of which syntactic and semantic properties of

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<sup>51</sup> Lack of alternatives is the most common objection to the conventionality of depiction. See, for example, Abell (2005b), Hopkins (2003b) and Lopes (1996, 132-5).

symbol systems are specified as necessary and sufficient for depiction, not all depiction will belong to symbol systems in use which possess these syntactic and semantic properties. This suggests that the platitude that depiction is mediated by resemblance is a better foundation for an analysis of depiction than structural features of symbol systems.

One clarification. Although, the examples just given show that depictions need not be conventional, they do not show that depictions must not be conventional. It is possible for the use of a depictive symbol system to meet all the clauses of the analysis of convention given and so it is possible for depictive symbol systems to be conventional symbol systems as well. So although, as I have just argued, not all depictions belong to conventionally mediated symbol systems, some depictive symbol systems may also meet the conditions of the analysis of conventional symbol systems. So depictive representation may sometimes be conventional in just as strong a sense as linguistic representation always is.

The diagrams standardly used for illustrating positions in chess games, for example, meet all the conditions of both the analysis of convention and the analysis of depictive symbol systems. The first clause of both analyses is met as before: it is a trivial matter that there is a symbol system consisting of the relevant function from diagrams to positions in chess and it is obvious that there is a regularity of producing beliefs and actions with those diagrams corresponding to a regularity of truthfulness in that symbol system.

The second clause of the analysis of depictive symbol systems is also met since conformity to this regularity is often preferred by chess players over the system of notating games using the coordinates for each move in the game because of the resemblance of the diagrams to the positions on the chess board that they represent. The diagrams have utility because they can be appraised by sight in just the same way as if one were looking at the chess board itself.

The second clause of the analysis of conventional use of a symbol system is also met, since chess players only have reason to conform to that regularity if other chess players also conform. Most chess players would have reason to use only coordinate notation if others used only coordinate notation, since it is better to have a standardised system upon which everybody agrees. Similarly, the preference for using diagrams because of their resemblance to what they represent would not serve any purpose if nobody else adopted the same practice.

The third clause of the analysis of convention, which requires that there is an alternative regularity in another system which would serve just as well, is also met by the symbol system of chess diagrams. The bottom of a chess diagram always represents the side of the chess board from which white begins. But this convention could easily be reversed and the top side of the board be used to represent the side from which white begins, without affecting the resemblance of the diagrams to the positions they represent, and thus without giving the players any reason to use one system rather than the other.

The strongest form of conventionalism holds that depiction, like language, is mediated wholly by convention. I have argued, to the contrary, that depiction is unlike language because it is mediated by resemblance. Weaker forms of conventionalism allow that depiction is mediated by resemblance, but hold that it is always mediated by convention as well. I have also argued against this weaker form of conventionalism, arguing that some depictive symbol systems are not mediated by convention at all. But I have conceded that depictive symbol systems may sometimes be mediated by convention in just the way that linguistic meaning is, so my conclusions are compatible with an extremely weak form of conventionalism about depiction.<sup>52</sup>

So. Descriptive representation is always mediated by convention and depictive representation is always mediated by resemblance. But depictive representation may

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<sup>52</sup> See Abell (2005b) for a discussion of different versions of depictive conventionalism. Bennett (1971) advocates the strongest version.

sometimes be mediated by convention as well as resemblance. This conclusion supports the commonsense platitude that depiction is mediated by resemblance, but also recognises Goodman's insight that depiction and convention are more closely analogous than is generally recognised. Depiction is not equally as arbitrary as description, but it often can be so. Depiction is sometimes, but not always, mediated by convention in just the same way as language.

### 6.3 Literal and Non-Literal Meaning

The arguments just given that not all depictions belong to symbol systems in use and that not all depiction is mediated by convention might be taken to prove too much, on the grounds that they present a parallel problem for Lewis' analysis of conventional language. The problem is that non-literal and loose uses of language suggest that people do not conform to regularities of truthfulness in the languages that they actually speak. In cases of hyperbole, metaphor and irony, for example, it is standard to say things which one knows to be false and does not intend one's audience to believe. The prevalence of such examples suggests that there is in fact no regularity of truthfulness in English, since we often speak falsely in English.

Lewis' response to the problem is to agree that there is no regularity of truthfulness in literal English, but argue that there is a regularity of truthfulness in a more complex language, which consists of a function that takes English sentences to their non-literal rather than their literal meanings. This more complex language would take an ironic utterance of the sentence 'John is a fine friend' to the truth-condition of John being a false friend, an utterance of 'Juliet is the sun' to the truth-condition of Juliet being pretty, and so on. Literal English is then taken as a simplified version of this more complex language.

The arguments I gave to show that depiction is not a kind of symbol system and is not mediated by convention also show that Lewis' response to this problem is incorrect. While Lewis is right that people do conform to a regularity of truthfulness in the more



complicated language, he is incorrect that there is any convention of conforming to that regularity. The reason is that although the regularity of truthfulness in the more complex language trivially meets the first condition of the analysis of convention, it need not conform to the second and fourth conditions of the analysis of convention.

There might, for example, be a population of speakers who engage heavily in metaphor, irony, hyperbole, puns and other non-literal usage. Such a group of speakers would trivially conform to a regularity of truthfulness in a language more complex than their literal one. But they may all fail to meet the second condition of the analysis, because it might be that they would prefer to use non-literal language even if other members of the population began a strict regime of speaking literally.

The population in question would not regard such a change in other members as a matter of indifference with the thought that as long as effective communication were not impaired it does not matter whether people speak literally or not, just as speaking in an alternative literal language such as French or German would not be any worse than speaking English. Rather all consider that the result of speaking literally would be boring and tedious and all feel that were this to happen it would be up to them to keep things lively by talking as non-literally as possible.

The third condition would not obtain in such a population either, because although speaking in literal English is an alternative to speaking in non-literal English, it is not the case that everybody would have reason to speak in literal English if others did, since it is not the case that everybody would prefer to speak literally if others do. Speaking literal English is an alternative to speaking non-literal English, but it isn't an alternative which is just as good as speaking non-literal English, because non-literal English has more scope for entertainment and expression.

The fourth condition may not obtain in a population who all conform to a regularity of truthfulness in a non-literal language, but would prefer themselves to be the only people who conformed to the regularity of truthfulness in the non-literal language instead of its

literal alternative. This situation might arise, for example, in a population in which everybody wants to impress by the aptness of their metaphors and prefer others to speak dully in order that their own talk be more impressive by comparison.

The fifth condition, which requires that all members of the population be aware that the conditions of the analysis obtain, need not be met either. There might be a population, for example, in which everyone speaks non-literally all the time. Everyone in the population does so and has reason to do so merely because others do: the population is a shy and nervous bunch of people who don't want to stand out from their peers. Secretly, everyone in the population would be equally happy to speak literally but, not knowing this about the others, the final clause of the analysis of convention is not met.

So it follows, contrary to Lewis and for the same reasons that not all depictions depict by belonging to depictive symbol systems or are mediated by convention, that non-literal utterances don't have their meanings in virtue of conventions of truthfulness in a language more complicated than literal English. Nevertheless, it does not follow that the argument that not all depictions belong to depictive symbol systems proves too much, because although the argument also proves that there is no convention of truthfulness in a non-literal language, this extra conclusion is correct.<sup>53</sup>

This means that Lewis cannot defend his analysis of when a language is conventionally used by a population by appeal to conventions of truthfulness in non-literal languages and that another solution is required to the problem posed by the fact that due to metaphor, irony, hyperbole and other non-literal language, there is no regularity of truthfulness in literal English. I think the solution is to maintain that there is a conventional regularity of speaking literal, rather than non-literal English, but that truthfulness has to be redefined to capture the regularity required in order accommodate metaphor, irony and non-literal talk.

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<sup>53</sup> Sperber and Wilson (2002) argue for this point in detail.

So the correct response to the problem is that truthfulness in a language should not be defined as uttering sentences in that language when one intends one's audiences to believe or bring about that the truth-conditions obtain, since this definition has the consequence that there is no regularity of truthfulness in English. Instead, truthfulness should be defined as uttering sentences in a language when the audience is intended to infer from the fact that a sentence has the mood and truth-condition that it does that the utterance is intended to induce an effect in them, but not necessarily to believe or bring about that that truth-condition obtains.

So, for example, literal utterances of 'It's raining' conform to a regularity of truthfulness in English because audiences of utterances of 'It's raining' are intended to infer from the fact that the sentence's truth-condition in English is that it's raining that they are intended to believe that it's raining. Metaphorical utterances of 'Juliet is the sun' also conform to a regularity of truthfulness in English, because audiences are intended to infer from the fact that the sentence's truth-condition in English is that Juliet is the sun that they are intended to believe something else, such as that Juliet is beautiful.

#### 6.4 All Members of Depictive Symbol Systems are Depictions

In section 6.1 I argued that not all depictions belong to depictive symbol systems, in this section I will argue that all characters belonging to depictive symbol systems are depictions. In order to do that I will argue that if something meets the conditions of the analysis of depictive symbol systems given here, then this entails that it also meets the conditions of the analysis of depiction given in Chapter 2. That supports the conclusion that analysing depiction by combining Grice's analysis of meaning with resemblance covers depiction generally, of which belonging to a depictive symbol system is simply a special case.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> The argument of this section also supports the analogy between depictive and linguistic representation by paralleling Lewis' (1969, 152-9) argument that utterances

I argued in Chapter 2 for defining depiction by combining Grice's analysis of meaning with resemblance approximately as follows:

- (7) Something depicts another if and only if it is intended that:
- a. the former resembles the latter
  - b. an audience recognise that the former resembles the latter
  - c. the audience infer at least in part from the fact that the former resembles the latter that it is intended:
  - d. that the former produce an effect in the audience
  - e. and that that effect be produced at least in part by means of the audience's recognition of intentions (a)-(e).

So, for example, the Mona Lisa depicts Lisa because Leo intended that the Mona Lisa resemble Lisa and intended his audience to infer from the fact that the Mona Lisa resembles Lisa that he intended to produce an effect in them by means of recognition of his intention.

I will argue that belonging to a depictive symbol system is a sufficient condition for depiction by arguing that all characters which belong to depictive symbol systems also meet the conditions of analysis (7). This argument is important because it lends support to both the analysis of depiction and the analysis of depictive symbol systems and also provides insights about their relationship and the relationships between depictive and descriptive modes of representation more generally. I will proceed by showing how all five clauses of the analysis of depiction are entailed by the analysis of depictive symbol systems.

First, for a character to belong to a depictive symbol system, the perpetrator must prefer to conform to the regularity of truthfulness in that symbol system because the characters of the symbol system resemble their extensions. If the perpetrator prefers to conform to

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conforming to his analysis of conventional meaning also conform to Grice's analysis of speaker meaning.

the symbol system for this reason, then the perpetrator must intend the character to resemble its extension. So clause (a) of the analysis of depiction, which requires that the character is intended to resemble its extension, is also met.

For example, for a map to belong to the symbol system of cartography, the map's perpetrator must prefer to conform to a regularity of truthfulness in the symbol system of cartography because maps resemble their extensions. So the perpetrator must intend for the map to resemble the terrain it represents. So by being a character in a depictive symbol system, the map is also intended to resemble the terrain it represents and so meets clause (a) of the analysis of depiction.

Secondly, to belong to a depictive symbol system, a character must be perpetrated in conformity with a regularity of truthfulness in that symbol system that everybody in a population, including the character's audience, must expect to obtain. So the perpetrator of the character will intend their audience to recognise that their perpetration of the character conforms to that regularity, and thus to recognise that the character resembles its extension. So any character belonging to a depictive symbol system will meet clause (b) of the analysis of depiction.

Thirdly, for a character to belong to a depictive symbol system the character's perpetrator must prefer to conform to the regularity of using that symbol system because the symbol system's characters resemble their extensions. The reason for this preference is that the resemblance of characters to their extensions makes it easier for the audience to infer what effect the perpetrator intends to achieve. It follows that the perpetrator intends the audience to infer the perpetrator's intentions at least in part from recognising what the character resembles.

For example, for a map to belong to the symbol system of cartography, the map's perpetrator must prefer to conform to the cartographic system because maps resemble the terrain they represent. The perpetrator's reason for the preference is that the resemblance of maps to terrain makes it easier for people to read, understand and use

maps and hence easier for people to recognise the perpetrator's intended effect. Therefore, the map meets the condition that the perpetrator's intentions are intended to be inferred from the resemblance of the map to what it represents.

Fourthly, for a character to belong to a depictive symbol system, the character's perpetrator must conform to a regularity of truthfulness in that symbol system. A regularity of truthfulness in a symbol system is using that character to induce the audience to believe or bring about the state of affairs corresponding to the character in that symbol system. This corresponds to clause (d) of the analysis of depiction, which requires that the perpetrator of a depiction intends to produce an effect in their audience.

For example, for a map to belong to the symbol system of cartography, the map's perpetrator must conform to the regularity of using maps to induce the audience to believe that places are located as shown by the map. Since the perpetrator conforms to the regularity of using maps in this way, he or she must intend that the audience does believe something, such as that there are high mountains nearby. So by producing a character in a depictive symbol system, the perpetrator also meets clause (d) of the analysis of depiction.

Fifthly, for a character to belong to a depictive symbol system, it must be recognised by everyone that all the conditions of the analysis of depictive symbol systems obtain. So to conform to the convention, the perpetrator must intend all of the relevant intentions to be recognised. Since the conditions of the analysis of convention include the conditions of the analysis of depiction, the perpetrator must also intend it to be recognised that the conditions of the analysis of depiction be met.

So, while not every depiction is a character in a depictive symbol system, every character in a depictive symbol system is a depiction. Depiction is not a kind of symbol system, but depictive symbol systems are a kind of depiction. This reveals an additional analogy between depiction and language: just as all members of depictive symbol systems also fall under the more general Gricean analysis of depiction, all utterances of

conventional language also fall under the more general Gricean analysis of meaningful utterances.

## 6.5 Conclusion

So although depictive symbol systems are a special kind of depiction, not all depictions belong to depictive symbol systems. Furthermore, not all depictions belong to symbol systems in use, even if it is granted that symbol systems in use should be defined in terms of convention. It follows that no definition of depiction in terms of structural, syntactic or semantic properties of symbol systems can succeed. Since all members of depictive symbol systems meet the conditions of the analysis of depiction in terms of resemblance and Grice's analysis of meaning, it seems likely that that analysis can succeed in capturing the similarity between depictions belonging to depictive symbol systems and depictions produced *ad hoc*.

One objection. The main conclusion of this chapter – that depiction is not a kind of symbol system – might seem to undermine the analogy between depiction and language, since the analysis of conventional language encompasses the whole of the phenomena it is expected to, whereas the analysis of depictive symbol systems appears not to. While maps, for example, have their linguistic analogues, it may seem that Philomela's tapestry, improvised sketches and other less systematic depictions lack linguistic cousins, so that the relationship between depictive and descriptive representation is not as close as Goodman and I both believe.

But this conclusion would be premature. Just as some depictions fall under the analysis of depictive symbol systems whereas others do not, some spoken utterances belong to conventional language whereas others fall outside it. If somebody calls out loudly in alarm, for example, then, whilst their call trivially belongs to some language or another, whether it falls under the analysis of conventional language use will depend on the preferences, reasons and beliefs of the speaker and their population. Such improvised

utterances are the analogues of depictions which fall outside the analysis of depictive symbol systems.<sup>55</sup>

In Chapter 2 I introduced Grice's division of the analysis of meaning into an analysis of what speakers mean, or speaker meaning, and of what sentences mean, or sentence meaning (Grice, 1957; 1968). The analysis of conventional language is an analysis of sentence meaning, which is why it excludes many examples of speaker meaning, such as shouts of alarm and other improvisations. By paralleling the analysis of conventional meaning, the analysis of depictive symbol systems captures the aspect of depictive representation which is analogous to sentence meaning.

The definition of depictive symbol systems fails as a definition of depiction itself only because the definition of depiction should parallel speaker meaning, rather than sentence meaning. But the definition of depictive symbol systems succeeds for the same reason: it shows that the distinction between sentence and speaker meaning in the philosophy of language is exactly paralleled by the distinction between depictive symbol systems and depiction itself in the philosophy of depiction. It follows that depictive and descriptive representation are closely analogous.

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<sup>55</sup> See especially Davidson (1986) for argument that not all language is conventional.



## 7 Images, Intentionality and Inexistence

The platitude that depiction is mediated by resemblance tends to be undermined by reflection on the fact that depiction is representational. In Chapter 2 I showed how resemblance could be combined with representation – using Grice’s analysis of meaning – to provide an analysis of depiction in the form of necessary and sufficient conditions. But the difficulty of combining representation and resemblance is not the only difficulty in reconciling the platitude that depiction is mediated by resemblance with the fact that depiction is a kind of representation. One of the most acute problems is to reconcile the platitude that depiction is mediated by resemblance with the intentionality of depiction.

Three features of depiction are symptomatic of its intentionality. The first symptom is the apparent possibility of depicting non-existents. The second symptom is the possibility of depicting something without depicting anything in particular. The third symptom is the possibility of depictive misrepresentation: it is possible to depict Tolstoy as a child, for example, even if Tolstoy is not a child. All three symptoms of the intentionality of depiction are problematic for the platitude that depiction is mediated by resemblance, but the difficulties are raised most strikingly by the problem of the depiction of non-existents. This section introduces the three problems, beginning with the depiction of non-existents.

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

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. (Remember that examples of 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. 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 draw 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.<sup>56</sup> Correctly resolving the trilemma concerning the depiction of non-existents should resolve this problem too.

Section 7.1 considers 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 7.2 considers 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 7.3 considers the possibility of denying the thesis that resemblance is a relation between existents by postulating non-

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<sup>56</sup> This example is from Kaplan (1969, 199).

existent objects. Section 7.4 argues for denying the thesis that some depictions represent non-existent objects by arguing that depiction is a relation between states of affairs. Section 7.5 concludes.

## 7.1 Experienced Resemblance

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.

Hopkins (1994; 1998, 94-121) 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, 77) analysis:

- (20) 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, 77) acknowledges that accidentally taken photographs need not be intended to be experienced, but this complication isn't important here.)

One Clarification. An experience of resemblance does not always require both the thing that resembles and the thing that is resembled to be present. If somebody is familiar with a company logo, for example, then whenever they see that logo their experience will represent it as having the property of resembling the instances of the logo that they have

seen in the past.<sup>57</sup> So an experience of resemblance is not just experiencing similar things at the same time, but having an experience which represents one thing as having the property of another thing, which may or may not be present.

In the case of seeing a depiction, Hopkins suggests that one's experience of the depiction will represent the depiction as having the property of resembling whatever it is it represents, which does not require what it represents to be present. So, for example, when I look at the Mona Lisa, according to Hopkins, my experience of the Mona Lisa will represent that the Mona Lisa has the property of resembling Lisa. My experience can represent the Mona Lisa as having that property, even when Lisa herself is not present or even if I have never seen Lisa but merely have some idea of what she looks like.

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.<sup>58</sup> 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

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<sup>57</sup> See Peacocke (1987, 385) for this example.

<sup>58</sup> Another way to pursue Hopkins' strategy is to analyse depiction in terms of conditional resemblance (Hopkins, 1994, 424). According to this proposal, not all depictions resemble what they represent, but all depictions would resemble what they represent if they were accurate. Unfortunately, Hopkins does not pursue the proposal further.

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 anything 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 are two serious problems with Hopkins' proposal. The first problem is that analysing depiction in terms of experienced resemblance only accommodates the possibility of depicting non-existents at the cost of entailing that experiences of such depictions are not veridical, even under optimal conditions. Take, for example, Santa's portrait. According to Hopkins, Santa's portrait is experienced as having the property of resembling Santa. But since Santa does not exist, Santa's portrait cannot genuinely have the property of resembling Santa. It follows that experiences of Santa's portraits as resembling Santa are non-veridical, even when they are accompanied by perfect lighting, clear eyesight and full knowledge that Santa does not exist.

The second 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 chapter discusses whether any solutions to the problem of intentionality can meet this constraint.

One clarification. From the point of view of outer space, Hopkins' analysis of depiction and my own are not very different: both analyse depiction by combining resemblance with intentional attitudes and my analysis differs from Hopkins merely in substituting communicative intentions for visual experience. Given this similarity, it might be wondered why I don't exploit the intentionality of communicative intentions to solve the trilemma by denying the first thesis in the same way as Hopkins does. In the following paragraphs I will try to answer this query, in a way that should also clarify why I think that Hopkins' solution is defective.

One application of Grice's analysis of meaning is as part of a reduction of all intentionality – mental and linguistic – to the purely physical. That reduction can be undertaken in two steps: the first step is the reduction of linguistic intentionality to mental intentionality via Grice's analyses of speaker and sentence meaning and the second step is the reduction of mental intentionality to the purely physical using some other analysis, such as functionalism or teleosemantics. The whole reduction is successful only if the second stage – analysing linguistic intentionality in terms of the purely physical – makes no use of intentional linguistic idioms.

The difficulty that arises from this requirement may be appreciated by considering the following analysis of assertion, which introduces the variable ' $p$ ' to make the quantification in the analysis explicit: A person asserts that  $p$  by an utterance if and only if the person intends the utterance to produce the belief that  $p$  in the audience by means of recognition of that intention. So, for example, I assert that it's raining by uttering 'It's raining' if and only if I intend someone to believe that it's raining by means of recognition of my intention.

The difficulty for the reductive project involves specifying the domain which the variable ' $p$ ' ranges over, and this involves specifying what belief is a relation towards.



One not implausible candidate is that belief is a relation towards internal sentences<sup>59</sup> and that 'p' in Grice's analysis of assertion ranges over these sentences. But if that is the correct proposal then the analysis of assertion, and the analysis of meaning of which it is an instance, cannot do the work required for it to be a part of a reduction of all intentionality to the purely physical.

So for the reductive project to succeed, some other account of what 'p' ranges over has to be given. As I argue below, for example, belief and intentionality in general may have to be construed as relations towards propositions or states of affairs, rather than towards inner sentences. But if this is the correct solution in the case of belief, then the analysis indicates that it is also the correct solution in the case of meaning, since the left hand side of the analysis must now be understood as expressing a three-place relation between people, utterances and propositions.

Analogous points would apply to exploiting the analysis of depiction in terms of communicative intentions and to Hopkins' analysis of depiction in terms of experience in order to resolve the current trilemma by denying its first thesis. This would amount to an attempt to reduce the depictive representation of non-existents to the mental or experiential representation of non-existents. But this reduction can only be successful if it can be shown that mental representation of non-existents does not tacitly involve pictorial representation.

It is possible, for example, that the problem posed for the analysis of experience by the possibility of hallucinations should be resolved by construing experience as a relation towards an inner picture, just as a belief may be construed as a relation towards an inner sentence. Hopkins' attempt to reduce the depiction of non-existents to the experience of non-existents is only effective if some alternative to this proposal can be given. But if there is some alternative to this proposal, then, as I shall argue below, it may be applied

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<sup>59</sup> For this proposal see Field (1978). For related points about the reductive prospects of Grice's analysis of meaning see Schiffer (1987, 13-7).

directly to the analysis of depiction in a way that will prove more informative. The following sections discuss alternatives of this kind.

## 7.2 Unbreakable Predicates

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 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 of ‘being a Santa-depiction’.

As well as the depiction of non-existents, Goodman’s proposal appears able to resolve the problems of depicting 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 of ‘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 something, 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.

### 7.3 Non-Existent Objects

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.<sup>60</sup>

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 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. 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 sharing properties.

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<sup>60</sup> Hyman (2006, 65) advocates this strategy.

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 not about things which exist can be construed as states that are about Meinongian objects which don't exist.<sup>61</sup>

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-existents.

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<sup>61</sup> See Parsons (1980) for a contemporary discussion of 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. 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 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 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.<sup>62</sup>

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 is.<sup>63</sup>

#### 7.4 States of Affairs

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 not all depiction is between 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

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<sup>62</sup> See Parsons (1995) for discussion of this problem.

<sup>63</sup> 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.

thesis, that some depictions represent non-existents. In this section, I will argue for rejecting the third thesis by construing depiction as a relation towards states of affairs.<sup>64</sup>

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 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

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<sup>64</sup> Wolterstorff (1980, 282-4) proposes that depictions represent states of affairs.



they represent must not reside in the different particulars they represent. I will suggest in the following pages 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.<sup>65</sup> 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 towards 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.

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,

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<sup>65</sup> This phrase is borrowed from Kripke (1963).

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 solve 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 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 the depiction of non-existents, analysing depiction as a relation towards 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 being tall. So if depiction is a relation toward 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 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.

One clarification. This solution involves a partial denial of the thesis that all depictions resemble what they represent, since depictions which completely misrepresent particulars, like the police's wanted poster, do not resemble those particulars in any relevant respect. Nevertheless, the first thesis is preserved as the thesis that depictive states of affairs resemble the state of affairs they represent. The state of affairs of the wanted poster's being a certain colour and shape, for example, resembles the state of affairs of the criminal's being similarly coloured and shaped. So as well as denying the third thesis, that some depictions represent non-existents, this solution involves a modification of the first thesis, that all depictions resemble what they represent (in relevant respects).

As well as being compatible with the platitude that depiction is mediated by resemblance, analysing depiction as a relation towards 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 the 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 involves 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, like Hopkins' proposal, merely shifts the bump in the carpet. 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 in this chapter 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 in the theory I argue for in Chapter 8, 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 form 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.<sup>66</sup>

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

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<sup>66</sup> 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.

example, wears a red coat in some possible worlds, but a green coat in others.<sup>67</sup> 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. The depiction of non-actual possibilia is another counterexample to the thesis that all depictions resemble the particulars they represent.

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.

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 that exist and states of affairs that obtain. 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.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> See Walton (1971b, 246) for this point.

<sup>68</sup> 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.

## 7.5 Conclusion

The analysandum of previous chapters were the conditions under which something depicts another. But if the conclusion of this chapter is correct, the analysandum should have been the conditions under which an object depicts a state of affairs. This leads to the following analysis of depiction:

- (21) An object depicts a state of affairs if and only if it is intended that if the object reaches an audience of a certain type then:
- a. the object's having a property resembles that state of affairs
  - b. the audience recognises that the object's having a property resembles that state of affairs
  - c. the audience infers at least in part from the fact that the object's having a property resembles that state of affairs that it is intended:
    - d. that the object induce an effect in the audience
    - e. that this effect be induced by means of providing a reason
    - f. and that the audience recognise intentions (a)-(f).

So the Mona Lisa depicts Lisa's smiling, for example, because Leo intended the Mona Lisa's having a certain shape to resemble Lisa's smiling in respect of being a state of affairs of something's having a certain shape and intended his audience to infer his communicative intentions from that resemblance. (As its number indicates, analysis (21) is the mature version of the analysis.)

Once the depiction of states of affairs is defined, the depiction of objects and of properties can be defined as follows:

- (22) An object depicts another if and only if the former depicts a state of affairs of the latter's having a property.

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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.

(23) An object depicts a property if and only if the object depicts a state of affairs of something's having that property.

So, for example, the Mona Lisa depicts Lisa and depicts the property of smiling because the Mona Lisa depicts the state of affairs of Lisa's smiling.

I have considered four proposals for resolving the problems of depictive intentionality: analysing depiction in terms of experience, denying that depiction is unequivocally relational, 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 problems of intentionality. But even for those who believe that a different solution to the problem of intentionality is more plausible, it seems likely that that solution will also be compatible with the platitude that depiction is mediated by resemblance.

The most striking morals of this discussion are 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 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.

## 8 Pictures, Perspective and Possibility

Representations distinguish between different ways the world might be: depictions are just like thoughts and sentences in that they carry information by making divisions in the space of possibilities. The Mona Lisa, for example, conveys information about Lisa by distinguishing amongst the various possible ways which Lisa might look. These points motivate the application of possible world semantics – which has proved useful in the analysis of language, fiction, mental representation and so forth – to depiction.<sup>69</sup> In this chapter I show how the application of possible world semantics to depiction yields interesting conclusions about the nature of depiction and the viability of possible world semantics in general.

Developing a possible worlds semantic for depiction also fills the lacuna left in the last chapter by the lack of an analysis of states of affairs. In this chapter, I will propose that states of affairs should be analysed as sets of possible worlds. This proposal, I argue, leaves no doubt that analysing depiction as a relation towards states of affairs is capable of resolving the problems discussed in the previous chapter. However, it should be kept in mind that the solution of the last chapter works independently of whether it is combined with the application of possible world semantics: possible world semantics provides one plausible way to elaborate upon the thesis that depiction is a relation towards states of affairs, but not the only way.

Another reason for considering applying possible world semantics to pictures is that doing so puts a different perspective on traditional objections to the possible worlds framework. I will argue that most of the problems for applying the framework to pictures turn out to be familiar problems with the application of the framework to the semantics of language and mental content. However, responses to those objections that

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<sup>69</sup> For the applications of possible world semantics see, for example, Kripke (1963; 1980), Lewis (1969; 1970; 1975; 1978; 1979), Ross (1997) and Stalnaker (1984; 1999).

seem very plausible in the linguistic case often look less plausible when applied to the pictorial case. I will argue that attention to the application of possible world semantics supports those modifications which are closest in spirit to the original motivation of the possible world framework, rather than the more radical kinds of departure which are often made in the linguistic case.

## 8.1 Possible Worlds

A possible world is a complete way things might be. The actual world, for example, is a complete way things might be: it includes not just the earth, but also other planets, galaxies, the spaces between planets and galaxies, and anything that actually exists. Other possible worlds include different planets and galaxies, but all of them are equally complete: there is no possible world which leaves any question undecided, since it is impossible for things not to be one way or another. Since, for example, there either was or was not a sea battle in 2006, every possible world is one in which there either was or was not a sea battle in 2006.

The original purpose of the introduction of possible worlds into philosophy was the analysis of modality: necessity can be analysed as truth in all possible worlds and possibility can be analysed as truth in some possible world. However, possible worlds turn out to be useful not only in the analysis of modality, but also the analysis of properties, states of affairs and causation, as well as the semantics of counterfactuals, deontic and doxastic logic, the semantics of natural language in general and the content of thought and fiction. In this chapter, I will argue that possible worlds are also useful for the analysis of pictures.

A state of affairs can be defined as a set of possible worlds. The state of affairs of grass' being green, for example, can be analysed as the set of possible worlds in which grass is green and the state of affairs of Lisa's smiling can be analysed as the set of possible worlds in which Lisa smiles. The state of affairs of a horse's grazing can be analysed as the set of possible worlds in which a horse is grazing: since different horses graze in

different possible worlds, the state of affairs of a horse's grazing need not be the state of affairs of any particular horses doing so. Similarly, the state of affairs of Santa's laughing can be analysed as the set of possible worlds in which Santa laughs: the puzzle of Santa's inexistence is overcome by postulating his existence in other possible worlds.

The advantage of defining states of affairs as sets of possible worlds is that there is a one to one correspondence between states of affairs and sets of possible worlds. The state of affairs of it's raining, for example, corresponds to the set of possible worlds in which it is raining; other sets of possible worlds all correspond to other states of affairs. The main objections to be considered are objections which purport to show that there is not a one to one correspondence between the states of affairs represented by depictions and sets of possible worlds. In particular, pictures in perspective and depictions of inconsistencies both seem to differ from each other in the states of affairs they represent without differing in the sets of possible worlds which they represent.

Two clarifications. First, given the points of the last chapter, possible worlds must exist in order to do the work required of them. However, no specific assumption is required about the exact nature of possible worlds. Possible worlds may, for example, be concrete entities which differ from the actual world merely in respect of the fact that we are not located within them or, more plausibly, possible worlds may merely be primitive abstract entities akin to numbers and sets. Of course, just as for the purposes of the analysis of natural language it is preferable that possible worlds not be analysed as sets of sentences, it is preferable for the purposes of analysing the content of depictions that possible worlds not be analysed as pictures of complete ways things might be.

Second, possible world semantics may be applied to depictions themselves as well as to sentences containing the word 'depicts' or its cognates.<sup>70</sup> For the purposes of this

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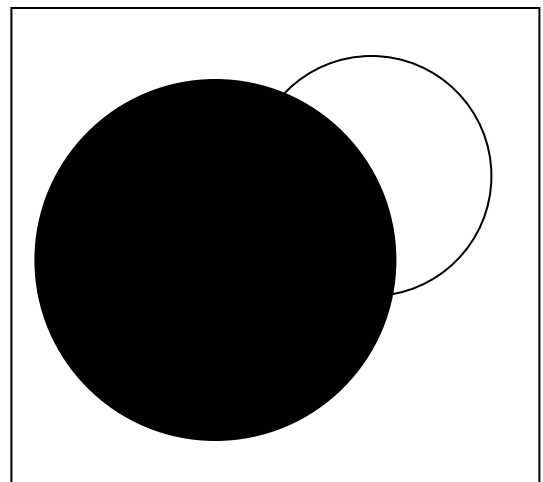
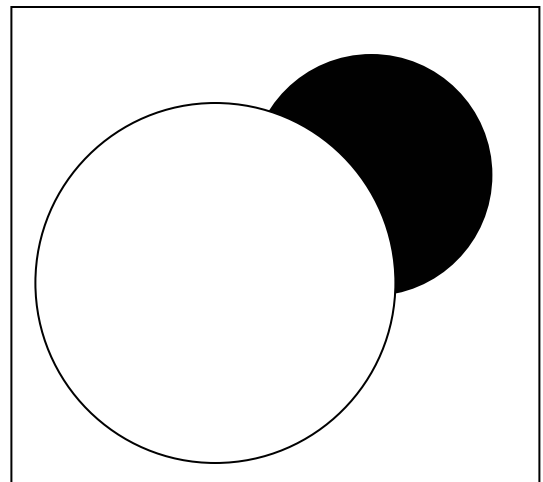
<sup>70</sup> See Howell (1974) and Ross (1997) for applications of possible world semantics to and Forbes (2006) for detailed discussion of the semantics of 'depicts' and cognate words.

chapter, I want to set aside problems that arise from attempts to apply possible world semantics to sentences containing the word ‘depicts’ rather than to depictions themselves. The application of possible world semantics to the locution ‘depicts Santa’, for example, is problematic because the term ‘Santa’ lacks reference. Whether the solution to this problem is to construe ‘Santa’ as a definite description instead of a name or to admit that utterances containing the expressions ‘depicts Santa’ are literally false and merely convey something true is an important and interesting issue, but one that can be ignored when the focus is on the content of depictions themselves.

## 8.2 Perspective

The first objection to the application of possible words semantics to depiction, due to Jeff Ross (1997, 72), is that sets of possible worlds are not fine grained enough to accommodate the fact that the objects in a picture are usually represented from a certain point of view or perspective. In most pictures the point of view is at some particular angle to the objects represented: for example, an architectural plan usually contains three drawings of a house: one from above and two from the sides. In other pictures the point of view may be that of a particular person such as the artist or a fictional character: in video games, for example, the point of view is often that of the fictional persona controlled by the player.

To illustrate the fact that sets of possible worlds are not fine grained enough to accommodate the representation of points of view, Ross considers two different depictions which both represent a white ball and a black ball. The only difference



between these two pictures is that in the first the white ball is in the foreground whilst the black ball is in the background, whereas in the second the black ball is in the foreground and the white ball is in the background. What the two pictures represent is different, since different balls are foregrounded in each picture, but the set of possible worlds associated with each picture must be the same, since both consist of the set of possible worlds in which a black ball is a certain distance from a white ball.

This is an important difficulty for analysing the content of depictions as sets of possible worlds. However, as Ross points out, the problem is not unique to depictive representation. The analysis of the contents of belief in terms of possible worlds, for example, also has to be revised to accommodate for beliefs with egocentric content. In the next few paragraphs I will explain, following Ross, the solution to the problem of accounting for egocentric content in general and then the application of that solution to depiction. I will then discuss the compatibility of that solution with the platitude that depiction is mediated by resemblance.

Consider the following example, due to Lewis (1979, 139). There are two Gods who inhabit two different mountains. Both of them know exactly which possible world they inhabit, which includes the knowledge that there are two Gods living on two different mountains in their world. Despite knowing this, the two Gods may still be unaware of which one they are. So if one of the two Gods were to learn which God exactly she was, the content of her knowledge could not be represented simply by a set of possible worlds, since the God already knew everything about which possible world she inhabited before learning which God she is. The content of what the God learns when she discovers which God she is cannot be captured by a set of possible worlds.

The problem is that sets of possible worlds are not fine-grained enough to accommodate everything the God knows when she learns which God she is. The solution to the problem is to analyse contents as sets of world, time and location triples. So, for example, when the Gods know everything about which possible world they inhabit and what the time is but not which God they are, the content of their knowledge can be

characterised as a set of two triples. The possible world and time value is the same in each triple, but the location triple is different in each, representing the fact that the Gods don't know which mountain it is that they inhabit. Once the Gods find out which mountain they inhabit, the content of what they learn may be represented by a single world, time and location triple.

One Clarification. Lewis, and Ross following him, both characterise egocentric belief as the self-ascription of a property, rather than a belief whose content is given by a set of world, time, location triples. Taking contents to be triplets of worlds, times and locations was originally suggested by Quine (1969); Lewis (1979) argues that the two views turn out to be equivalent. Triplets of worlds, times and individuals are often used rather than triples of worlds, times and locations: I prefer locations to individuals because I prefer to leave open the question of whether or not the point of view in some pictures is inhabited by any individual.<sup>71</sup> Triples of worlds, times and locations (or worlds, times and individuals) are called centred possible worlds.

The application of taking content to be a set of centred possible worlds rather than a set of possible worlds simpliciter to the case of depiction is not completely straightforward. The simplest suggestion would be to take the content of a depiction to be the set of centred possible worlds in which what is depicted can be seen from the time and location at the centre. But this would suggest that what is depicted is the onlooker instead of, as it should be, what they look on. Depictions do not represent the locations of certain points of view, but the way that things look when they are seen from those points of view.

Ross recognises and tries to address this problem in the following remark: "We are saying that the content of pictures, given that it includes viewpoint, must be represented as a property. But notice that what a picture *depicts* is certainly not its content-property. It depicts scenes and characters which anyone with the content property would see. We shall say that a picture *represents* the property in question." (Ross, 1997, 85). Ross

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<sup>71</sup> See Walton (1990, 337-48) and Currie (1995, 170-9) for discussion of this issue.

indicates that the problem can be solved by simply introducing a technical use of 'represents', but the problem seems to me to be deeper than this, because even if a picture does represent the viewpoint in a technical sense, an account is still required of what it depicts in the non-technical sense.

Depictive representation is not representation of the properties of viewers, but the representation of the properties of depicted objects. To solve the problem of how things can be represented by pictures from particular points of view, properties have to be found which those things represented have from some points of view and not others. In the case of the pictures of the white and black balls, a distinction must be drawn between the white ball having the property of being in the foreground and the black ball having the property of being in the foreground. I will argue in the following passages that the problem can be resolved by accepting a slight and intuitive revision of the standard analysis of properties in terms of possible worlds.

In the framework we are discussing, properties are analysed as functions from possible worlds to extensions, where the extensions are the set of objects which have that property in that possible world. So, for example, the property of being green is analysed as the function that takes the actual world to the set of things which are actually green, the possible world in which nothing is green to the null set, the possible world in which things which are actually red are green to the set of things which are actually red, and so forth.

Since the set of possible worlds in which the black ball is in the foreground is the same as the set of possible worlds in which the white ball is in the foreground, a function from possible worlds to the set of things that are in the foreground in that world cannot provide a property the representation of which can distinguish between the two pictures. More generally, if properties are functions from possible worlds to extensions, it is not possible to distinguish between different properties that things may have from different perspectives within the same possible world.



The solution is to construe properties as functions from centred possible worlds to extensions. The property of being in the foreground can then be analysed as a function which has the white ball in its extension at worlds centred on locations from which the white ball is in the foreground, and which has the black ball in its extension at worlds centred on locations from which the black ball is in the foreground. In general, functions from centred possible worlds to extensions are fine-grained enough to distinguish between properties things have at different extensions. (See Egan (2004; 2006a; 2006b) for arguments that egocentric content involves representation of this kind of property.)

So. Point of view in depiction can be accommodated by taking the content of a depiction to be the set of centred possible worlds in which the depicted objects have depicted properties, where those properties are functions from centred worlds to extensions rather than merely from worlds to extensions. As Ross remarks, the object at the centre of the set of the set of possible worlds is not the object depicted. But that set of centred possible worlds still captures the content of the depiction adequately, because it is a set of possible worlds in which the object which is depicted has certain egocentric properties relevant to that centre.

Originally, introducing centred possible worlds may have seemed to be problematic for the claim that depictions resemble what they represent. But the introduction of the corresponding centred properties reveals some attractive features of the combination of a resemblance theory of depiction with the claim that the contents of depictions are sets of centred possible worlds. The natural suggestion is that pictures from particular points of view resemble what they represent because they share centred properties with what they represent. Depictions resemble what they represent because they possess centred properties relative to the intended position of the viewer which the represented object possesses relative to the point of view represented by the picture.

Take, for example, anamorphic pictures, which appear to resemble what they represent only if viewed from certain angles. This can be easily explained on this account since the property in which the anamorphic picture resembles what it represents will be one

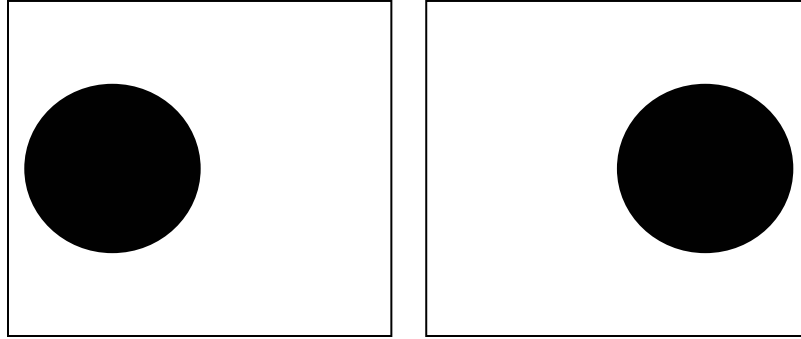
that it has only relative to the unusual position from which the picture has to be perceived. In Holbein's famous detail of the skull, for example, the property in which the detail resembles what it represents is one that it has only relative to a viewpoint at the extreme right of the picture. So the recognition of centred properties is important for understanding both the contents and the representational features of depictions, as well as the kinds of respects in which depictions resemble what they represent.

Two clarifications. First, to accommodate the point that some pictures, such as anamorphic pictures, only resemble what they represent relative to a certain time and place, the analysis has to be revised as follows:

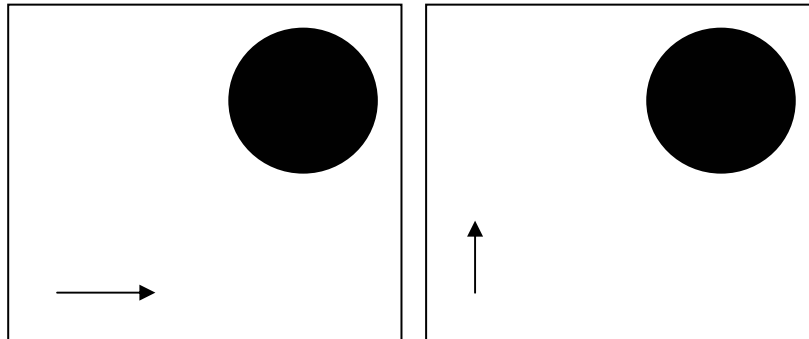
- (24) An object depicts a state of affairs if and only if it is intended that if the object reaches an audience of a certain type *at a certain time and place* then:
- a. the object's having a property *relative to that time and place* resembles that state of affairs
  - b. the audience recognises that the object's having a property *relative to that time and place* resembles that state of affairs
  - c. the audience infers at least in part from the fact that the object's having a property resembles that state of affairs that it is intended:
    - d. that the object induce an effect in the audience
    - e. that this effect be induced by means of providing a reason
    - f. and that the audience recognise intentions (a)-(f).

So, for example, Holbein's detail depicts a skull because if the detail is seen by an audience at the extreme right of the picture, then the detail's having the property of appearing to be a certain shape at the extreme right of the picture resembles the state of affairs of a skull's having that shape in respect of both being states of affairs of something's appearing to have that shape.

Second, it may be necessary to add an orientation as well as a time and a place. Consider, for example, the following two pictures, which represent respectively a sphere to the left and a sphere to the right:



The set of world, time and location triples relative to which the sphere is to the left is the same as the set of world time and location triples to which the sphere is to the right. To distinguish between what is represented an orientation has to be added, as is illustrated by the following diagrams from the birds eye point of view, representing the location and orientation of the viewpoint in each of the pictures above:



The viewpoint is at the same location in each diagram, but the difference in orientation represented by the arrows produces the difference in content between the pictures above.

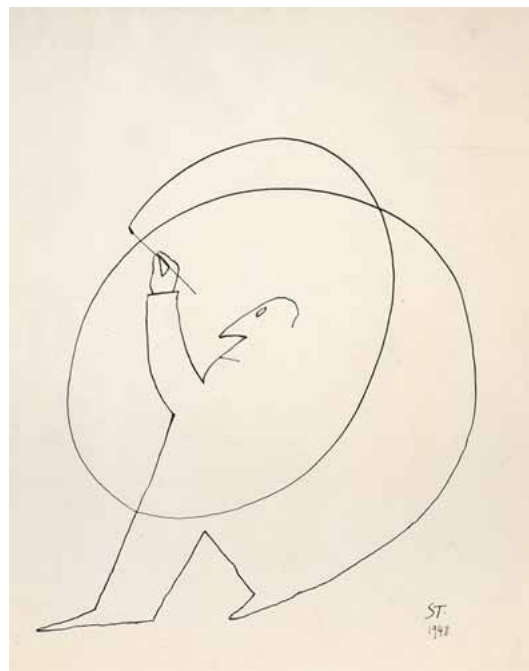
### 8.3 Inconsistency

Another respect in which sets of possible worlds are too coarse grained to be the contents of pictures is that they cannot accommodate the contents of depictions which represent inconsistencies. Whether there are depictions with inconsistent content is a matter of controversy (See Sorenson (2002) for discussion of many examples). Common examples include Escher's depiction of a set of connected stairs which continually rises and his depiction of a waterfall which continuously falls. But although Escher's pictures depict states of affairs which are inconsistent with Euclidean geometry, there are other possible geometries with which they are consistent, and so Escher's pictures do not

provide examples of depictions of logical inconsistencies.

Another interesting example, given by Sorenson, is a picture consisting of a straight line, captioned “square-circle, side-view”. The difficulty with this example is that too much reliance is placed on the caption in order to determine what the picture represents, rather than on the visible properties of the picture itself. I am willing to concede a large role to captions in determining what pictures represent by assisting viewers to determine the communicative intentions of their creators. Nevertheless, in this case the view that the purported resemblance of a straight line to a square circle on its side does not play any role in the inference, so that the resemblance of the line to a square-circle is completely incidental to the representation.

The Steinberg picture to the right is another plausible example of a depiction of a logical impossibility, since it is a picture of a man creating himself.<sup>72</sup> However, whether self-creation is inconsistent depends on views about time and causation: the example only involves a genuine logical inconsistency if simultaneous causation is impossible. It seems plausible to me that while both



backwards and simultaneous causation may be inconsistent with the laws of physics, neither obviously involves any logical inconsistency.

But despite the lack of convincing examples, it seems likely to me that there must be examples of depictions of inconsistencies, since representations of inconsistencies are

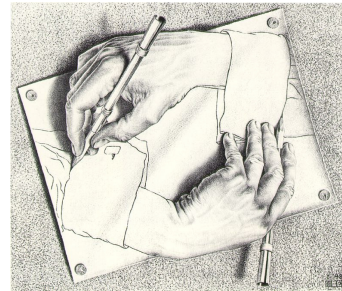
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<sup>72</sup> This example is suggested by Searle (1969) and discussed in detail by Jonathon Ichikawa on the Fake Barn Country weblog at:

[http://blogs.brown.edu/other/philosophy/2005/11/a\\_picture\\_of\\_a\\_logical\\_impossi.html](http://blogs.brown.edu/other/philosophy/2005/11/a_picture_of_a_logical_impossi.html)

uncontroversially present in both linguistic and mental representation. However, I want to argue that these inconsistencies can be treated without too radical a departure from the possible worlds framework. There are a number of ways to extend the possible worlds framework to cover the depiction of inconsistency, just as there are a number of ways to extend it to cover the representation of inconsistency in general. In the following paragraphs, I will use the example of depiction to argue that the most plausible ways to accommodate inconsistency are those which remain closer to the original proposal.

The first option is to analyse depictions of inconsistencies as depictions with multiple contents, which may each be represented by a distinct set of possible worlds. Escher's picture of two hands drawing each other, for example, seems to possess two interpretations which are individually consistent, but jointly inconsistent. On one



interpretation, the top hand is drawing and the bottom hand is drawn, whereas on the other interpretation, the top hand is drawn and the bottom hand is drawing. The two interpretations can each be represented by a consistent set of possible worlds, even though there is no set of possible worlds that captures both interpretations.

A second option is to analyse the content of depictions by introducing more fine-grained contents than sets of possible worlds, such as ordered  $n$ -tuples of objects and properties. A line that depicts a square circle on its side, for example, may depict the ordered quintuple of an object, the property of being square, the property of being circular and the centred property of being on the side. Although ordered  $n$ -tuples of objects and properties are more fine grained than sets of possible worlds, the proposal remains close to the analysis in terms of possible worlds, because each ordered  $n$ -tuple of objects and properties determines a set of possible worlds in which the relevant objects possess the relevant properties.

A third option is to replace the analysis of the contents of depiction in terms of sets of possible worlds with an analysis in terms of sets of worlds simpliciter, by allowing the

inclusion of impossible as well as possible worlds. This would accommodate depictions of inconsistencies straightforwardly, since depictions of different inconsistencies would depict different sets of impossible worlds. However, the introduction of impossible worlds does have some costs. Because possible worlds are consistent and complete, the rules of classical logic hold within them, so that analyses in terms of possible worlds provide an analysis of an ill understood phenomena in terms of an extremely well understood phenomena. Impossible worlds lack this virtue.

Whichever course turns out to be right, I doubt there is any difficulty for the platitude that depiction is mediated by resemblance. However the content of depictions of inconsistencies is construed, that content will involve the representation of depicted objects as having certain properties. As a result of involving those properties, the content of the depiction and the state of affairs of the depiction's having certain colours and shapes will bear some kind of resemblance to each other, and that resemblance will mediate the picture's depiction of its content. So considering depictions of the impossible provides neither an argument against the analysis of depiction as a relation towards states of affairs nor an argument against the platitude that depiction is mediated by resemblance.

#### 8.4 Conclusion

The application of possible world semantics to the contents of depiction requires revision to cope with depictions in perspective and depictions of inconsistency, but the revisions that are required are close to the spirit of the possible worlds framework and raise no difficulties for the platitude that depiction is mediated by resemblance. The success of these revisions in defending the application of possible world semantics to depiction suggest that similar strategies should be pursued for resolving the similar problems which arise for the analysis of the contents of thought, language and fiction in terms of possible worlds, rather than revisions which depart more radically from the spirit of the possible worlds framework.

## 9 Conclusion

This thesis has defended the platitude that whereas words are connected to what they represent merely by arbitrary conventions, depictions are connected to what they represent by resemblance. I have argued, for example, that the important difference between my portrait and my name is that whereas my portrait and I are connected by my portrait's resemblance to me, my name and I are connected merely by an arbitrary convention. While there are no doubt many further objections and problems, I believe that many of the most important objections to the platitude given by Goodman and others have been resolved.

I have also defended a strong analogy between depictive and linguistic representation. Both depictions and descriptions, according to my analysis, derive their contents from the contents of the intentions and beliefs of their perpetrators and audiences. Both depictions and descriptions belong to symbol systems, which may be specified in terms of functions from characters to extensions, and which must be mediated by either convention or resemblance. Moreover, the contents of both depictions and descriptions, as well as the contents of mental representation and indication, may be specified using possible world semantics.

Finally, I have argued that depictive representation is derived from mental representation, rather than vice versa. The priority of mental representation over depictive representation suggests that analysing mental representation in terms of either depiction or resemblance is unlikely to be helpful in reducing the mental to the physical. However, like the analysis of linguistic representation in terms of mental representation, the analysis of depiction I have argued for in this thesis may form one step in the reduction of all intentionality to the purely physical, via a reduction of both depictive and descriptive representation to mental representation.

In the following sections, I want to conclude by drawing in more detail some of the consequences of the theory of depiction developed in this thesis for other areas of philosophy. As well as the intrinsic interest of providing a defence of the platitude that depiction is mediated by resemblance, the analysis has interesting consequences for the philosophy of language, the philosophy of mind and the philosophy of art. The following sections briefly discuss some of the consequences of the analysis for each of these areas in turn.

## 9.1 Philosophy of Language

It's often argued that there ought to be a general theory of representation of which linguistic theory forms only one part. The general theory would encompass not only linguistic representation but also depictive representation, hybrid forms such as film and advertising, any other forms of non-natural representation, and perhaps indication and natural representation as well.<sup>73</sup> But while the possibility of such a general theory is often agreed upon, there is little agreement and few proposals about what form that theory should take. Despite many successes in the theory of linguistic representation, few of these successes have been successfully generalised.

Lack of success has led to scepticism. Gilbert Harman, for example, writes "... there is no ordinary sense of the word 'mean' in which a picture of a man means a man or means that man. This suggests that Peirce's theory of signs would comprise at least three rather different subjects: a theory of intended meaning, a theory of evidence, and a theory of pictorial depiction. There is no reason to suppose these three theories would have any principles in common." (Harman, 1977, 214). The lack of success in producing a general theory of representation has suggested to many that the general theory of representation should be abandoned in favour of smaller theories of various kinds of representation and that no general theory of semiotics is possible.

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<sup>73</sup> See, for example, Eco (1984).



I have not provided a general theory of representation, but the theory of depiction I have argued for suggests optimism, since it suggests, contrary to Harman, that the theories of depictive and linguistic representation have various principles in common. In particular, Grice's analysis of meaning accommodates both depictive and linguistic utterances, Lewis' analysis of conventional language use is easily adapted to provide an analysis of depictive symbol systems, and the content of both depictions and sentences is best construed as, perhaps structured, sets of centred possible worlds. This suggests, contrary to Harman, that it may be possible to give a unified theory of depictive and descriptive representation as well as separate theories of the various genera of representation.

## 9.2 Philosophy of Mind

Traditionally, images have been used as a way of explaining mental representation, a role for which they seemed to be suited because of their apparent similarity with natural representation or indication. The thesis that depiction is language-like, rather than natural, seems to undermine the possibility of images playing this role in mental representation, because it stresses the fact that mental representation is prior to depictive representation. On the other hand, the priority of mental over depictive representation may be compatible with mental representation being depictive in some respects, just as the priority of mental over linguistic representation is compatible with mental representation displaying linguistic features such as compositionality.

This supports a few conclusions about the nature of mental representation. First, mental representation is prior to both depictive and linguistic representation. That means that a reductive analysis of mental representation in terms of the physical, or some other more fundamental category, must not have recourse to either public language linguistic concepts or depictive ones. However, in so far as it is possible to analyse mental representation naturalistically in terms of indication or causation, it may also be possible to do so in terms of resemblance. In so far as such a reductive analysis is not possible, mental representation must be primitive, with both depictive representation and linguistic representation deriving from it.

Second, the hypothesis that the structure of the mind is map-like or depictive is unlikely to provide a genuine alternative to the language of thought hypothesis, or the hypothesis that mental structure is language-like or descriptive. This is because the distinction between depiction and description, as I argued in Chapter 4, should not be drawn in terms of structural syntactic and semantic properties of depictive symbol systems, but instead in terms of foundational questions about how depictions and descriptions are mediated. If this is the case, then the hypothesis that mental representation is depictive rather than descriptive suggests an alternative hypothesis about how thought is mediated rather than about how thought is structured.

Third, the analysis of depiction suggests that if mental images are a kind of depiction, then their role in cognition must be limited. The reason is that the resemblance of a mental image to what it represents is not sufficient for the mental image to depict what it represents except in the presence of further intentions and beliefs of the person entertaining the image. It follows that, unless there is a way to analyse mental images in terms of resemblance without appeal to the presence of further mental representations, not all thought could be conducted in mental images, since every mental image would require the presence of further images to fix its content, leading to an infinite regress of mental images.<sup>74</sup>

Fourth, although no direct argument is given that the relation between propositional attitudes and propositions should not be analysed in terms of resemblance, this view seems to me to lose its appeal once the dependence of depiction on mental representation is appreciated. The idea that mental representation is mediated by resemblance is suggested by an analogy with depictive representation. The analogy is in turn suggested by the idea that both mental and depictive representation are natural kinds of representation. However, I have argued throughout that depictive representation is non-natural, so the appeal of the analogy is lost.

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<sup>74</sup> See Fodor (1975, 174-94) for this argument.

### 9.3 Philosophy of Art

In the introduction, I raised two issues in the philosophy of art connected with depiction. The first issue was whether depictions are realistic to the degree in which they resemble what they represent. This analysis of depictive realism does not entail and is not entailed by analyses of depiction itself in terms of resemblance, but there is an intuitive affinity between the two. This affinity shows at least that the analysis of depiction I have given is compatible with at least one analysis of depictive realism and that the analysis of depictive realism in terms of resemblance is compatible with at least one analysis of depiction.<sup>75</sup>

The second issue raised in the introduction is the ability of analyses in terms of resemblance to account for the aesthetic interest of depictions, given that the platitude that depiction is mediated by resemblance seems to suggest that depictions are merely inferior imitations of what they represent. A realistic depiction of boots, for example, may be aesthetically interesting, despite being a mere imitation of boots which are themselves unattractive. Analyses of depiction which can explain this phenomenon have an advantage over their competitors and no analysis of depiction can afford to be inconsistent with it.

The analysis of depiction which combines resemblance with Grice's analysis is able to explain this phenomenon by appealing to the intended effect in the audience. As Flint Schier writes in an article on this subject: "Just as I non-naturally mean that  $p$  when I intend the doxastic impact of my utterance to be a function of your recognizing my intention to make that impact, so my making some object  $O$  has artistic significance if I intend part of the aesthetic impact of  $O$  to be a function of your recognizing my intention that  $O$  should make that impact." (Schier, 1993, 196). The aesthetic value of art is

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<sup>75</sup> Abell (2007, 4) clarifies the connection between analyses of depictive representation and of depictive realism.

inherited from the aesthetic effects which works of art are successfully intended to achieve, by means of recognition of intention.

# List of Analyses

- (1) Something depicts another if and only if the former resembles the latter.
- (2) Something depicts another if and only if the former resembles *and represents* the latter.
- (3) Something depicts another if and only if the former represents the latter *in virtue of* the former resembling the latter.
- (4) A person means something by an utterance if and only if the person intends the utterance to produce an effect in an audience by means of recognition of that intention.
- (5) Something depicts another if and only if the former is intended induce *the latter to be seen-in the former* by means of recognition of this intention.
- (6) A person means something by an utterance if and only if the person intends that:
  - a. the utterance has a certain feature
  - b. an audience recognise that the utterance has that feature
  - c. the audience infer at least in part from the fact that the utterance has that feature that the person intends:
    - d. that the utterance produce an effect in the audience
    - e. and that that effect be produced at least in part by means of the audience's recognition of intentions (a)-(e).
- (7) Something depicts another if and only if it is intended that:

- a. *the former resembles the latter*
  - b. an audience recognise that *the former resembles the latter*
  - c. the audience infer at least in part from the fact that *the former resembles the latter* that it is intended:
  - d. that the former produce an effect in the audience
  - e. and that that effect be produced at least in part by means of the audience's recognition of intentions (a)-(e).
- (8) A marked surface depicts *O* accurately (whether *O* is a particular *a*, or an object of the type *F* that is no particular of that type) if and only if:
- a. Its maker(s) intended that it resemble *O* in at least one visible respect (or that it would do if *O* existed) and thereby that it represent *O*;
  - b. It resembles *O* in the relevant respect(s), or would do if *O* existed;
  - c. The above resemblances are the intended effects of the actions that produced them; and
  - d. Suitable viewers with the ability visually to recognise *O* are able to identify the intended respect(s) of resemblance and thereby work out that it is intended to represent *O*.
- (9) Something depicts another if and only if it is intended that *if the former reaches an audience of a certain type then*:
- a. the former resembles the latter
  - b. the audience recognise that the former resembles the latter
  - c. the audience infer at least in part from the fact that the former resembles the latter that it is intended:
  - d. that the former produce an effect in the audience
  - e. and that that effect be produced at least in part by means of the audience's recognition of intentions (a)-(e).
- (10) Something depicts another if and only if it is intended *successfully* that if the former reaches an audience of a certain type then:

- a. the former resembles the latter
  - b. the audience recognise that the former resembles the latter
  - c. the audience infer at least in part from the fact that the former resembles the latter that it is intended:
  - d. that the former produce an effect in the audience
  - e. and that that effect be produced at least in part by means of the audience's recognition of intentions (a)-(e).
- (11) Something depicts another if and only if it is intended successfully that if the former reaches an audience of a certain type then:
- a. the former resembles the latter
  - b. the audience recognise that the former resembles the latter
  - c. the audience infer at least in part from the fact that the former resembles the latter that it is intended:
  - d. that the former induce an effect in the audience
  - e. *and that the audience recognise intentions (a)-(e).*
- (12) Something depicts another if and only if it is intended successfully that if the former reaches an audience of a certain type then:
- a. the former resembles the latter
  - b. the audience recognise that the former resembles the latter
  - c. the audience infer at least in part from the fact that the former resembles the latter that it is intended:
  - d. that the former induce an effect in the audience
  - e. *that this effect be induced by means of providing a reason*
  - f. and that the audience recognise intentions (a)-(f).
- (13) A symbol system is depictive if and only if every character in that symbol system resembles its extension.
- (14) A regularity in the behaviour of a group is a convention if and only if:

- a. everyone conforms to that regularity
  - b. everyone expects everyone else to conform to that regularity
  - c. everyone has reason to conform on condition that everyone else conforms.
- (15) A regularity in the behaviour of a group is a convention if and only if:
- a. everyone conforms to that regularity
  - b. everyone has reason to conform on condition that everyone else conforms
  - c. *everyone believes (a)-(c).*
- (16) A regularity in the behaviour of a group is a convention if and only if:
- a. everyone conforms to that regularity
  - b. everyone has reason to conform on condition that everyone else conforms
  - c. *everyone prefers everyone to conform, on condition that most do*
  - d. everyone believes (a)-(d).
- (17) A regularity in the behaviour of a group is a convention if and only if:
- a. everyone conforms to that regularity
  - b. everyone has reason to conform on condition that everyone else conforms
  - c. *there is an alternative regularity which everyone would have had reason to conform to if others had conformed to it*
  - d. everyone prefers everyone to conform, on condition that most do
  - e. everyone believes (a)-(e).
- (18) A group has a convention of using a language if and only if there is a regularity in the group such that:
- a. everyone is truthful in that language
  - b. everyone has reason to be truthful in that language on condition that everyone else is truthful in that language
  - c. there is an alternative regularity of truthfulness in another language which everyone would have reason to conform to if others did



- d. everyone prefers everyone to conform to a regularity of truthfulness in that language on condition that most do
  - e. everyone believes (a)-(e).
- (19) A symbol system is depictive if and only if there is a regularity of truthfulness in that symbol system such that:
- a. everyone is truthful in that symbol system
  - b. everyone has reason to be truthful in that symbol system, *since its characters resemble their extensions*
  - c. everyone prefers everyone to conform to a regularity of truthfulness in that symbol system on condition that most do
  - d. everyone believes (a)-(d).
- (20) Something depicts another if and only if viewers are intended to *experience* the former as resembling the latter in outline shape.
- (21) An object depicts a state of affairs if and only if it is intended successfully that if the object reaches an audience of a certain type then:
- a. that object's having a property resembles that state of affairs
  - b. the audience recognises that the object's having a property resembles that state of affairs
  - c. the audience infers at least in part from the fact that the object's having a property resembles that state of affairs that it is intended:
  - d. that the object induce an effect in the audience
  - e. that this effect be induced by means of providing a reason
  - f. and that the audience recognise intentions (a)-(f).
- (22) An object depicts another if and only if the former depicts a state of affairs of the latter's having a property.

- (23) An object depicts a property if and only if the object depicts a state of affairs of something's having that property.
- (24) An object depicts a state of affairs if and only if it is intended that if the object reaches an audience of a certain type *at a certain time and place* then:
- a. the object's having a property *relative to that time and place* resembles that state of affairs
  - b. the audience recognise that the object's having a property *relative to that time and place* resembles that state of affairs
  - c. the audience infer at least in part from the fact that the object's having a property resembles that state of affairs that it is intended:
  - d. that the object induce an effect in the audience
  - e. that this effect be induced by means of providing a reason
  - f. and that the audience recognise intentions (a)-(f).

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