

Defining Depiction

I

It's a platitude that whereas words are connected to what they represent merely by arbitrary conventions, pictures are connected to what they represent because they resemble what they represent. My portrait and my name, for example, are importantly different because whereas my portrait and I are connected by my portrait's resemblance to me, my name and I are only arbitrarily connected. In this essay, I argue for an analysis of depiction which supports this platitude by combining it with Paul Grice's (1989) analysis of speaker meaning in terms of communicative intentions.

The platitude that depiction is mediated by resemblance is famously argued against by Nelson Goodman (1968). Goodman points out that because of the ubiquity, reflexivity and symmetry of resemblance, it is not sufficient for the Mona Lisa to represent Lisa that the Mona Lisa resemble Lisa. Moreover, resemblance is insufficient for depiction even when combined with representation: the phrase 'this phrase', for example, both resembles and represents itself, but does not depict itself. The problem is that the resemblance of 'this phrase' to itself is completely incidental to its representation of itself.

I aim to defend the platitude that depiction is mediated by resemblance by applying Grice's analysis of meaning in order to specify the non-incidental role of resemblance in depictive representation. Depictions, I shall argue, are representational because they are perpetrated with the successful intention of inducing an effect in their audience by means of recognition of intention. Resemblance is non-incidentally connected to the way that depictions represent because the audience infers the perpetrators communicative intentions from the depiction's resemblance to what it represents.

Section Two introduces the problem of the insufficiency of resemblance for depiction. Section Three argues for the application of Grice's analysis of meaning to depiction. Section Four argues against analysing depiction by substituting experienced resemblance

for the intended effect in Grice's analysis. Section Five shows how depiction can be analysed by substituting resemblance for the feature from which audiences infer the communicative intentions of perpetrators. Sections Six, Seven and Eight show how the application of Grice's analysis can be defended against objections: most objections turn out to be objections to the analysis of meaning in general, which are susceptible to familiar replies.

One clarification. Depiction is a distinctive kind of representation, common to figurative painting and sculpture, photographs, maps, sketches and the like. So 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 they intuitively don't belong to the same kind of representation as figurative paintings. Figurative and non-figurative paintings are alike in that they are flat surfaces marked with paint, rather than representations of a single kind. Similarly, some representations in non-visual media depict, since they represent like figurative pictures.¹

II

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

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 insufficiency of this analysis is obvious from the ubiquity of resemblance. 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. Most paintings bear a closer

¹ That not all pictures are depictions is agreed upon even by those who, like Goodman, deny that depiction is mediated by resemblance. See Lopes (1996, 5-6). The contrary is more controversial, but see Kulvicki (2006, 5-6).

resemblance to other paintings than to the objects they represent.² 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. Nevertheless, most things are not depictions of each other.

This suggests the problem is to specify the particular respects in which 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 respects required for depictive representation.

But 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. There are counterexamples to the sufficiency of resemblance for depiction which are also counterexamples to the sufficiency of resemblance in any specific respect, so 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 insufficiency of resemblance

² See Goodman (1968, 4-5) for these examples.

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 specific respects. 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 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:

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.

This analysis also accommodates all the counterexamples to the sufficiency of the first. Members of the same family 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 this 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.³

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:

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.⁴

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.

So in order to meet Goodman’s argument, an adequate analysis of depiction in terms of resemblance has to specify a non-incidental connection between representation and resemblance. Simply conjoining resemblance and representation is ineffective, so such a specification requires a more detailed analysis of how depiction is representational. In the next section, I argue that Grice’s analysis of speaker meaning should be adopted for this

³ Similar points are made by Schier (1986, 4) and Wolterstorff (1980, 297).

⁴ Klaus Sachs-Hombach (2003, 171) advances an analysis in this spirit.

purpose and in subsequent sections I argue that combining resemblance with Grice's analysis provides a non-incidental connection between representation and resemblance.

III

In this section I argue, following Catharine Abell (2005), that depictive representation should be analysed by applying Grice's (1989) analysis of meaning: depictions are representational because they are perpetrated with the intention of inducing effects in audiences by means of recognition of such intentions. In the following paragraphs I will explain Grice's analysis and argue for its application to depiction. In subsequent sections I will discuss how Grice's analysis can be used to specify the non-incidental role of resemblance in depictive representation and then respond to objections.

Grice (1989, 217) begins his analysis by distinguishing between sentence meaning and speaker meaning. Suppose 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 my utterance of the sentence means. Rather, my utterance on this occasion merely means that the aeroplane is unusually long. 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 (1989, 217) procedure is to analyse speaker meaning first, and then to use that analysis to give an analysis of sentence meaning. The procedure is justified because of the dependence of meaning on use: since the timeless or conventional meaning of sentences depends on what speakers use those sentences to mean on particular occasions, sentence meaning depends on speaker meaning. I will argue that the sense in which depiction is representational should also be specified by 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 the utterance to produce an effect in the audience (Grice, 1989, 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. So I intend an effect in my audience, but I do not mean anything (Grice, 1989, 217).

The problem the example raises is that for an utterance 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 another non-meaningful way. The example shows that an adequate analysis of meaning has to characterise not only the effects, such as inducing belief or action, that meaningful utterances are used to accomplish, but must also characterise the distinctive way in which meaningful communication achieves those effects.

In response, Grice (1989, 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 (1989, 220) the following analysis:

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.

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 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.⁵

It would be a problematic disanalogy with meaning if there was any depiction whose purpose was not to produce any effect in its audience. The fact that the purposes of some depictions are purely aesthetic 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 that's purpose is purely aesthetic is at least intended to produce some aesthetic experience concerning what it represents in the 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 resemble and be

⁵ See David Novitz (1977, 5-10) for convincing argument that depictive representation depends on use.

believed to be 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 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 (1989, 92) explicitly uses in an extended sense to cover any kind of action, including dropping handkerchiefs and producing words as well as painting canvasses. 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, 2005, 59). So the Mona Lisa, for example, represents Lisa because Leo intended to induce an effect – such as the belief that Lisa was beautiful – 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 argument.

IV

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, by means of recognition of intention, to produce beliefs, whereas commands are those utterances which are intended, by means of recognition of intention, to produce actions. Similarly, fictions are utterances intended to induce, by means of recognition of intention, make-beliefs⁶ and jokes are utterances intended, by means of recognition of intention, to induce laughter. 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.

Robert Hopkins (1998) has proposed that experienced resemblance is such an effect in the audiences of depictions, which is that audiences experience depictions as resembling what they represent. This suggests the following analysis, which substitutes experienced resemblance for the intended effect in Grice’s analysis:

Something depicts another if and only if the former is intended to induce the former to be experienced as resembling the latter by means of recognition of this intention.⁷

⁶ See Currie (1990) for the analysis of fiction which specifies make-belief as the intended effect in Grice’s analysis.

⁷ This is not Hopkins’ (1998) analysis, which requires depictions to be experienced as resembling what they represent in the specific respect of outline shape and does not require that the intention for a depiction to be experienced as resembling what it

According to this analysis, the Mona Lisa depicts Lisa because Leo intended the Mona Lisa to be experienced as resembling Lisa, by means of recognition of his intention.

One Clarification. Experiencing a resemblance does not 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 is likely to represent it as having the property of resembling the instances of the logo that they have seen in the past.⁸ 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 resembling another thing, which may or may not be present.

By specifying experienced resemblance as the intended effect in Grice's analysis, this analysis appears to provide for a non-incidental connection between representation and resemblance. 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 experience the sentence as resembling itself. This suggests that this combination of Grice's analysis of meaning with experienced resemblance escapes the problem raised earlier for the straightforward conjunction of resemblance with representation.

But the following counterexample shows that this is not so. Suppose I sincerely write: 'I intend this sentence to induce itself to be experienced as resembling itself by means of recognition of my intention'. Since I fulfil the conditions of the analysis which substitutes experienced resemblance for the intended effect in Grice's analysis, the analysis predicts that I have not only written that sentence, but also depicted it. But although the sentence is intended to be experienced as resembling itself by means of recognition of my

represents be recognised. The analysis is interesting not as a version of Hopkins' analysis of depiction, but as a natural application of Grice's analysis of meaning to depiction.

⁸ See Peacocke (1987, 385) for this example.

intention, it is not a depiction of itself, since its representation of itself is paradigmatically not depictive.

In this case, the fact that the sentence is intended to be experienced as resembling 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 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.

Perhaps the counterexample can be avoided by denying that things can be experienced as resembling themselves, and thus denying that I can sincerely intend my sentence to be experienced as resembling itself by means of recognition of my intention. But since there are pictures that represent themselves, denying that things can be experienced as resembling themselves is not an available response.⁹ One might just deny that this particular sentence can be experienced as resembling itself, but there seems no principled reason to do so.

A similar counterexample will exist for any attempt to analyse depiction by specifying the intended effect in Grice's analysis. Whatever effect is specified, it will be possible to write a sentence announcing the sincere intention of the writer to produce that 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 resemblance in some other way. In the next section, I will argue that the role of resemblance is to allow audiences of depictions to infer the communicative intentions of their perpetrators.

V

⁹ See Walton (1990, 117-121) for examples of depictions that depict themselves.

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.¹⁰

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 that 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:

A person means something by an utterance if and only if the person intends that:

- a. the utterance has a certain feature
- b. the audience recognises that the utterance has that feature
- c. the audience infers 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

¹⁰ 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.¹¹

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. 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 by allowing audiences to infer the intentions of speakers who conform to the convention.

Whereas linguistic utterances are connected to what they represent by arbitrary conventions, depictions are 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:

Something depicts another if and only if it is intended that:

- 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).

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

¹¹ See Grice (1989, 103) and Avramides (1989, 47) for this version of the analysis. See Harman (1974; 2006) for defence of the 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 the experienced resemblance 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 outside 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 examples of irrationality discussed in Section Seven) have the intentions I declare I have using that sentence.

The platitude that depiction is mediated by resemblance stresses the differences between depictive and descriptive representation, but in the final analysis depiction has turned out to be importantly similar to verbal representation. Although one is mediated by convention and the other by resemblance, both descriptive and depictive representation turn out to display a similar dependence on the communicative intentions of their perpetrators. In the next three sections, I will respond to objections to the application of Grice’s analysis of meaning to the defence of the platitude that depiction is mediated by resemblance by exploiting this analogy between depictive and descriptive representation.

VI

The next three sections respond to three objections. The objections all attempt to exploit disanalogies between depiction and speaker meaning. Since the strength of the analogy between depiction and speaker meaning is both an interesting conclusion in its own right

and an important premise in my defence of the platitude that depictions is mediated by resemblance, responding to these objections is especially important. I will argue in each case that the purported disanalogy between speaker meaning and depiction dissolves on closer examination.

Grice analyses all meaning on the model of communication: meaning something, according to Grice, 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. Sometimes, according to the objection, depiction is more solitary than social.

But this is 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 paradigmatic cases of meaning may involve communication between an utterer and a separate audience, this is far from always the case: speaker meaning is also sometimes more solitary than social.¹²

Some of the examples can be dealt with just by a spirit of inclusiveness about who counts as an audience. The intended audience of a preparatory sketch may be the sketcher at a latter time and the intended audience of doodling in margins may be the doodler, who wants to relieve his or her present boredom. Similarly, singing in the shower may be intended for the enjoyment of the singer and a diary writer might be his or her own audience. In many of the examples given, the perpetrator is the audience.

¹² See Grice (1989, 112-115) and Schiffer (1972, 76-80) for discussion of this kind of example.

Not every example of depiction without an audience can be accommodated by this move. Imagine 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:

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).

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 I leave a note for my mother in law on the chance that she may call 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.

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 any audience at all: an allegorical writer or painter, for example, may intend his or her intentions to be recognised by a group of cognoscenti, but not by the censors. In such a case, the cognoscenti belong to the intended type of audience and are able to interpret the allegory, but the censors do not belong to the intended type and may be unaware of the work's additional meanings.

VII

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.

But there is an analogous counterexample, given by 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.

There is one response to this counterexample that would break the analogy between depiction and speaker meaning. It may be granted that 'Gleeg, gleeg, gleeg' has the

speaker meaning that it is snowing in Tibet in the example, but denied that this is problematic on the grounds that doing so 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.¹³

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 gesture, for example, would be wrongly counted as meaning anything it is intended to mean, no matter how outrageous.

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:

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 infers 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

¹³ See, for example, Lycan (2000, 108-9).

- e. and that that effect be induced at least in part by means of 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.

VIII

Suppose you took a photograph of your foot by accidentally dropping your Polaroid 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 should parallel natural rather than speaker meaning.

Natural meaning is meaning in a causal sense as, for example, when clouds mean rain, smoke means fire and the smell of milk may mean that it is off. Non-natural meaning is the kind I have been concerned with so far, including the sense in which 'Stop!' means to stop or in which a person means something by an utterance. I concede that the photograph represents a foot, but deny that it depicts one. The photograph, I argue, represents the foot in virtue of possessing natural, rather than non-natural, meaning.

The accidental photograph naturally represents your foot, because the nature of the photograph is causally dependent on the nature of your foot. 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.

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. Nevertheless, resemblance between feet and prints is incidental to 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.

This does not bar all photographs from being depictions, 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 successfully intended to allow audiences to infer the photographers 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.

Photographs still present a residual problem. 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 easily assimilated to 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 just as it excludes 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:

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 infers 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 recognises 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 makes the analysis too weak. Imagine I intend a brightly painted canvass to produce in you an epileptic fit. Further, imagine that the canvass resembles 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 irrational nature of the intended effect.¹⁴

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 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

¹⁴ See Schiffer (1972, 55-6) for an analogous counterexample to the analysis of meaning.

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 reason need not always be provided by the audience's recognition of the perpetrator's intention. That leads to the following analysis of depiction:

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 recognises that the former resembles the latter
- c. the audience infers 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 causal connection to what they represent tends to provide a reason for believing what they represent.¹⁵

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

¹⁵ See Schiffer (1972, 57-8) for an analogous amendment to the analysis of meaning.

Advertisements frequently fail to provide good reasons, but this is compatible with the analysis because they nevertheless succeed in providing 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 may not be a good reason for other people to eat ice-cream, but it is a reason nonetheless. So advertising does not provide counterexamples to 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 depicting or meaning anything. The analysis merely shows that communicative advertising requires the provision of reasons.¹⁶

So. Problems for applying Grice's analysis of speaker meaning to the analysis of depiction turn out to be general problems for the analysis of speaker meaning, which can be resolved by making intuitive amendments to both analyses. The analysis of depiction given rightly holds that depictive representation is a kind of speaker meaning rather than sentence meaning or natural meaning. There is an extremely close analogy, drawn out by the analysis of speaker meaning, between depictive and linguistic representation. Nevertheless, whereas language is mediated by convention, depiction is mediated by resemblance.

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¹⁶ See Pateman (1980) for further discussion of the application of philosophy of language to advertising.

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