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Intention, Interpretation and the Unconscious: Reconsidering the role of intention in artistic interpretation

by Frederick Thomas Hulbert

A thesis submitted to the University of Kent in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History and Philosophy of Art

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Abstract

This thesis is concerned with the relationship between intention, interpretation and the unconscious. Broadly speaking, it is a defence of moderate actual intentionalism that also acknowledges the presence of both natural and unconscious meanings in creative works, whilst arguing that interpretive monism still offers the most logical way of understanding these works. In Chapter One I develop a definition of intention. It is my belief that you cannot critique intention-based theories without first properly understanding the foundational concept on which they are built. I argue that conceptions of intention found in the recent academic literature are insufficient and we should return to the linguistic philosophies of Wittgenstein and Anscombe for a clearer understanding of intentional action. I sketch out a definition of which acknowledges that intentional actions require reason-based explanations and are not reducible to kinds of mental states. In Chapter Two I discuss the nature of interpretation and the Gricean distinction between natural and non-natural meaning. I argue that whilst the distinction is both legitimate and valuable the category of natural meaning is too broad because it aims to account for unintentional but artistically relevant features of a work as well as the complex methods of Marxist and Freudian derived hermeneutics. I suggest that there should be a third category which stands at the intersection between natural and non-natural meaning. This category recognises that unconscious intentions can be recovered from the work but these interpretations are symptomatic, therefore they require similar interpretive methods to natural meaning. In Chapter Three I offer two new test cases in defence of moderate actual intentionalism, arguing that private avowals of intention made by the artist are a legitimate epistemic consideration when forming an interpretation of their work. The first case is taken from contemporary visual art and the second comes from the field of literary theory. I argue that in both cases the pronouncements of intent made by the artist and author respectively are a defining factor in establishing the correct interpretation of their work. The work in the first three chapters raises a potential issue, namely it is not clear what we should do when the unconscious meanings contradict the pronouncements of intent made by the artist. I argue that in these cases we should either preference one form of intention over another or aim to establish the true intentions hidden in the unconscious. We should aim to establish the correct interpretation based on which theory is better supported by the content of the work and the relevant contextual information. If the statements made by the artist are not sufficiently supported by the content of the work or if the evidence for the unconscious interpretation is just more compelling we can opt to defend the latter. In Chapter Five I confirm what readers will have suspected, that I believe there is a single, correct interpretation for any given work. I argue that in cases where there are multiple correct interpretations they must be conjoinable

into one comprehensive interpretation consonant with the intentions of the artist, be it stated or unconscious. Whilst critical monism does not have popular consensus in the contemporary literature I argue that it is the most compelling interpretive approach. Ultimately, I believe we have a responsibility not to misrepresent the work of the artist and so we should pay close attention to what they intended to convey. When we interpret the words and actions of others we do not usually allow for a plurality of contradicting interpretations to apply and so we should treat art making like any other form of human action.

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Introduction

In a world of fake news, fundamentalism and sceptics, interpretation has never been a more relevant topic for discussion. Social media has now become the most powerful propaganda machine in history, reaching billions of people worldwide. The algorithms deployed by many of these sites depend on content that keeps users constantly engaged. This is the reason that fake news drowns out the truth, conspiracy theories have become mainstream and why scientific consensus no longer has the weight that it should. We see increasing violence, polarization and prejudice, and the Internet has played a huge role in this paradigm shift. The Internet gives us a false sense that various sources of information are equally legitimate. The falsehoods disseminated by companies like Infowars or Breitbart appear to gain as much traction as the mainstream media and the diatribes of lunatics in blogs are presented as counterarguments to the legitimate work of scientists. The membership to the Flat Earth Societies has risen dramatically over the last decade, as has the number of people who believe climate change is a hoax. It has become popular to reject the notion of absolute empirical truth altogether. Therefore, now more than ever, the practice of interpretation seems vital for understanding and utilizing information correctly. A crucial step towards overcoming these problems in any discipline is to properly investigate the nature of interpretation. Public figures like Donald Trump, Jordan Petersen, Ben Shapiro, Charlie Kirk and many others are regularly accused of being racist, misogynistic and inciting racial hatred, which are all accusations they vehemently deny. Understanding whether or not they are guilty requires an in-depth analysis of interpretation and the ways in which conscious and unconscious intentions can manifest themselves in the products of human action.

The word "interpretation" is used in a variety of contexts. Scientists interpret data, astrologers interpret the stars, people interpret events and objects or texts can be the subject of interpretation. For instance, Mattingly (1958) and Rousseau (1762) argue that Machiavelli's *The Prince* is a piece of political satire, the purpose of which is to "expound tyranny and promote republican government" (Mattingly 1958, p.482), Slavoj Zizek (2012) has subjected *The Sound of Music* to a psychoanalytic critique combining elements of Lacanian philosophy with Marxist Ideology, and Morris (1993) has offered a feminist reading of poetry and prose as manifestations of patriarchal prejudice. Ultimately, interpretation in the philosophy of art is concerned with understanding artistic creations, such as paintings, sculptures, novels, poems, films, works of architecture, and so on. Perhaps because it is such a complicated subject, interpretation remains a point of contention in aesthetics today.

Tracing it back to the late 14th Century, the word "interpret" was commonly used in relation to expounding meaning or rendering something clear and explicit. It comes from the thirteenth century Old French word "interpreter", which meant to explain or translate. This in turn, derives from the Latin word "interpretari" meaning to explain, expound or understand, with the Latin prefix "inter" used to talk about that which lies between or among. Whilst interpretation is a universal practice we undertake in virtue of being human, hermeneutical methods have undergone significant changes since the first discussions in ancient Greek philosophy. The origins of interpretation as a methodology can be traced back to the epics of Homer such as *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*. These are significant because they contributed a common set of values to Greek culture to which all Greeks subscribed, for instance, Homer's works provided models for what it was to be heroic, noble and how to lead a good life. One particularly interesting feature of these works was the use of allegories, which were a means of saying something other than what was literally the case. Allegorical interpretations are originally found in the work of the sophists and the stoics from the fifth and sixth-century BCE, and reached their peak in the late antiquity. This form of non-literal interpretation was used to defend works against "apparently blasphemous passages" (Tate 1927, p.214). Neoplatonists such as Porphyry and Proklos set up exegetical defences of various works of literature such as Homeric poetry which were accused of being offensive or sacrilegious. Proklos argues that dramatic themes signal the reader to delve beyond the literal meanings of the words to find ideas that have been expressed almost prophetically for future generations (Roilos 2006). For the Neoplatonists the epics of Homer are not meant to be read literally but as encrypted symbols which point to metaphysical truths. Allegory is now a standard literary device used to deliver a broader message or moral than a superficial reading of the text will allow.

> Allegorical interpretation of the ancient Greek myths began […] not with the grammarians, but with the philosophers. As a speculative thought developed, there grew up also the belief that in mystical and symbolic terms the ancient poets had expressed profound truths which were difficult to define in scientifically exact language. Assuming that the myth-makers were concerned to edify and to instruct, the philosophers found in apparent immoralities and impieties a warning that both in offensive and in inoffensive passages one must look beneath the surface for the true significance of the tales. (Tate 1929, p.142)

Ever since the period of Greek antiquity it has been common to ask questions about creative works. We often ask these questions because we do not understand the point of a work or the ideas behind it. For instance, it is not entirely clear to many what the central idea behind Vladamir Nabakov's *Lolita* is supposed to be. Nabakov explores controversial themes such as

child sex abuse but does not denounce them in a straightforward way or make it clear why they are important. There might also be an ambiguity in a given work or a sense that something has been left unsaid, as was the case in the 1967 television series *The Prisoner*, where the audience is left wondering whether the prisoner, known only as number six, has actually escaped. Sometimes we form hypotheses about characters or details in a given work, especially in relation to the allegories I have already mentioned. For instance, we would have good reason to believe that Aslan represents Jesus Christ in C.S. Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia* or that the Old Major in Orwell's *Animal Farm* seems to represent Karl Marx.

The common denominator in all of these cases is that they strive to look beneath the literal meanings presented in each word, sentence, brush stroke or scene or perhaps, they look for the meaning of these local structures in the larger context of the work as a whole. The focus is on the implicit contents of the work and the meanings they contain. At this point an early distinction can be drawn between two types of meaning. The first type of meaning is the broad type concerned with the general themes, theses or moral lessons. For instance, when Jackson Pollock tells his audience that *Convergence* is about free speech during the Cold War, he is discussing the broad thematic meaning of the work. The second type of meaning is concerned with specific passages or content within a work. For example, critics have agonised over Tommy Lee Jones's monologue at the end of *No Country for Old Men*. It is not clear whether his speech is meant to be a commentary on society, a meditation about life or a eulogy to a time when things were simpler. This kind of interpretation is directed only at part of the work.

Interpretation, as a practice, is an attempt to attribute meaning to, or recover it from a given work. The distinction between recovery and attribution, whilst subtle, is significant. Recovering meaning from a work implies that the meaning is already there and our job as interpreters is to find it. On the other hand, attributing meaning implies that an audience might legitimately place their own meanings onto the work as they see it. Many positions in the current literature rest on this distinction and ultimately my thesis defends the notion that work-meaning is something to be recovered rather than attributed.

One popular way to deal with interpretive problems is to appeal to the intentions of the artist. To establish an artist's intentions, we might investigate their personal documents, letters or diaries, or we might interview them if they are still alive to get their testimony first hand. If the evidence is compelling then we would have grounds to conclude that the artist intended to convey a particular meaning in their work. Whilst external evidence is useful for the purposes of determining the intentions of the artist, it is not always available. In these cases, interpreters can appeal to the work itself, because the text is often considered to be the best evidence for the

artist's intentions (Carroll 2000, p.77). Philosophers who appeal to the intentions of the artist in order to uncover the meaning of the work are called intentionalists. Broadly speaking then, intentionalism is the general view that the intentions of the artist play an important role in the interpretation of their work. There are many forms of intentionalism and this thesis is in part a defence of *moderate actual intentionalism*.

Before I outline that argument, it is important to establish what an intention actually is. We cannot have a thorough exposition and critical analysis of intentionalism predicated upon a faulty definition of intention. Some philosophers have argued that intentions are mental states, which act as executive attitudes towards plans (Livingston 2005). Other philosophers such as Wimsatt and Beardsley (1946) have argued that these intentions are simply plans or designs in the artist's mind which may or may not be realised in the creation of the work. These theories tend to split intention into two constituent parts: belief and desire. In Chapter One I outline many of these theories and explain why each of them is insufficient. Instead I endorse a definition of intention, which comes from, and bears similarity with, the philosophical tradition of Wittgenstein and Anscombe. In the linguistic tradition intentions can be found in the deliberate structure of the work and they do not represent private mental phenomena completely independent from the work itself. Intentions are not mental objects and they do not initiate actions as such, instead an intentional action is an action performed for particular reasons in a particular context.

> What distinguishes actions which are intentional from those which are not? The answer […] is that they are actions to which a certain sense of the question 'Why?' is given application; the sense is of course that in which the answer, if positive, gives a reason for acting. (Anscombe 1967, p.9)

The 'Why?' question to which Anscombe refers is a question about the reasons for which an action was undertaken. There is a distinction to be drawn here between reason-based explanations for action and causal-based explanations. For instance, the causal-based explanation for the plant growing is photosynthesis. The causal-based explanation of someone's fall may be that they tripped on an object. In the case of intentional action there are reason-based explanations for our deliberate behaviour such as *she kicked the ball because she wanted to pass it to her friend* or *she drew the picture because she thought the landscape looked beautiful*. For Anscombe reasons make sense of an action from the point of view of the agent who undertook the action. This still leaves us a little in the dark as to the specific nature of intentions but I want to move away from the notion that intentions can be reified as specific objects. However, in an effort to elucidate slightly further I offer an account similar to that of

Kalis (2019) where intentions are not mental states, causal mental events or even belief-desire pairs, but rather intentions can be seen from various patterns present in the world. Ultimately, I argue that when we say "the artist intended to paint that picture" it is true in virtue of corresponding patterns in the world (Wittgenstein 1982).

The linguistic tradition also reinforces the importance of rigorously defining key terms. Wittgenstein believed that most philosophical problems were the result of misunderstandings in language and I tend to share his belief. As such, Chapter One acts as a platform that sets up the rest of the thesis. In Chapter Two I give the concept of "interpretation" similar scrutiny. It is important to have a clear idea what an interpretation is and how it relates to the meaning of the work in order to engage in meaningful discussion about the relationship between intention and interpretation. For now, I will simply introduce the various popular interpretive positions held by critics in the philosophy of art as a means of providing context for my investigations.

The first of these positions is anti-intentionalism, which came to prominence in the mid twentieth century. It was most commonly associated with New Criticism theorists such as Wimsatt and Beardlsey (1946) or post-structuralist philosophers such as Roland Barthes (1967). The New Critics were a reaction to biographical criticism, a form of literary criticism that analysed the author's biography in order to form an interpretation of their work. Whilst biographical criticism is a longstanding critical method dating back to at least the Renaissance period, it does not have many supporters in the current literature. This is largely because it suffers from at least two logical flaws. First that it is impossible to discern which personal events in an artist's life contribute or relate directly to the creation of their work. Second, that biographical critics were focusing too heavily on the life of the author at the expense of the actual work. The New Critics then turned their sights to intentionalism when Wimsatt and Beardsley (1946) published a paper titled *The Intentional Fallacy*. This work was part of a long debate surrounding the relevance of intention to interpretation, which continues on to this day. The main thesis in their paper was that intentions are private mental phenomena, which can be bracketed away from the work. The anti-intentionalist does not accept that we should interpret this complex object formed of both the work and the bracketed intentions. They argue that the content of the work determines the meaning and so there is no reason to add an arbitrary component like the intentions of the artist in order to make sense of it. This argument is predicated upon the idea that creative works are autonomous objects and ultimately Wimsatt and Beardsley argue that any interpretive claims made should be tested against the content of the work rather than any arbitrary external features. Wimsatt and Beardsley distinguish between three types of evidence available for interpretation: internal, external and intermediate. Internal evidence is public evidence found in the work, external evidence is private evidence

such as statements of intent which they believe will result in the intentional fallacy and intermediate evidence is semi-private that is difficult to categorise.

> [I]nternal is also public: it is discovered through the semantics and syntax of a poem, through our habitual knowledge of the language, through grammars, dictionaries, and all the literature which is the source of dictionaries. (Wimsatt and Beardsley 1946, p.477)

This definition of internal evidence suggests that Wimsatt and Beardsley endorse a form of conventional meaning for what they consider to be good interpretive practice. The meaning of a work would not be tested against the statements of the author, rather it would depend on rules of grammar found in dictionaries or conventional meanings shared by a society or group. This would also be true of other creative works such as paintings. One worry might be that whilst it makes sense to talk of conventional meanings in relation to works of literature we cannot so easily apply this logic to paintings. For instance, how can images have conventional meanings? However, if the forms, lines and colours come together to give us images which we might recognise as a community and these images allow adequate scope for a particular interpretation then it may be legitimate. This form of anti-intentionalism insists that the interpreter can only appeal to the work itself for relevant evidence. For the anti-intentionalist, conventions are the essential ingredients for the purposes of establishing work-meaning. Wimsatt and Beardsley believe that if the artist's intention was successfully conveyed in the work then it should be clear to find by attending to the content of the work. Therefore, the intentions of the artist are, at best, extraneous to the process and therefore unnecessary when it comes to forming an interpretation.

As I will discuss throughout this thesis, there are many objections to anti-intentionalism. Perhaps the most powerful objection arrives in Chapter One where I point out that anti-intentionalism often has a faulty or overly simplistic conception of what an intention is. I argue that intentions cannot simply be bracketed away from the work and that when intentions are correctly understood we realise they are not inaccessible private phenomena. The second is that convention alone cannot point to a single definitive interpretation. The primary reason that interpretation is such a controversial topic is that creative works rarely offer sufficient evidence to support only one possible interpretation. Works often seem to support multiple interpretive theories and faced with the choice between competing theories critics often opt for the one that is consonant with the artist's intentions. It seems unlikely that a piece of contemporary abstract art will yield a single correct interpretation if we attend only to the internal evidence in the painting (Maes 2010).

A third objection is that appeal to convention alone cannot account for cases of irony (Carroll 2000, Hirsch 1976). It is not clear from the internal structure of a sentence that an agent speaking is being ironic because the structure of the sentence is identical to that of the same sentence said without irony. For instance, if a person writes, "I love Keanu Reeves, he's such a talented actor," only an appeal to his intentions would confirm whether or not his utterance was delivered with irony. Irony is just one example though where appeal to extraneous factors might be relevant to an interpretation. A literary work might contain a joke or a cultural reference that would only be understood by appealing to outside context. Once you concede contextual factors are important in at least some cases, it is logical to recognise that whilst words and phrases are not necessarily context dependent, works definitely are. Works are complex objects with historical and cultural significance.

In order to stave off these concerns an alternative interpretive approach is the value-maximisation theory (Davies 2007, 2006b). This theory has its origins in anti-intentionalism but makes slightly different claims. The value-maximising theory claims that the primary goal of any interpretation is to maximise the value of the work. It is not always clear exactly what constitutes the optimal value of a work but so long as the interpretation conforms to some relevant interpretive criteria and appears to be perceptive or revealing, then it could count as value-maximising. Value-maximisation allows for a plurality of possible interpretations to be acceptable simultaneously because there might be a number of interpretations that maximise the value of a work. This position is more versatile than the anti-intentionalist position because it does not exclude contextual factors that might be relevant when forming an interpretation. Many contextual factors could be said to enhance the value of a work. For instance, in the American animated television show *The Simpsons* there are many scenes that seem to mimic real life events such as the horsemeat scandal, Trump's election, the events of nine-eleven and many more. A value-maximiser might interpret these scenes as predictions of the future, where the events in real life provide a context to support this theory.

There are at least two major objections to the value-maximisation theory. The first of these maintains that it is not entirely clear in every case which interpretation will "maximise" the value of the work (Steenhagen 2015). For instance, whether reading Machiavelli's work *The Prince* as a piece of political satire brings out greater value than a more conventional reading, seems to be largely dependent on the preferences of the audience and the interpreter. It seems very difficult to instantiate objective criteria for the goal of value-maximisation. The second major objection is that an interpretation, which aims to maximise the value of a work, could make a terrible film seem quite good (Carroll 2011).

> I certainly think that readers care about deriving value from literature. However, I do not think that that disposes us to be always on the lookout for the interpretation that puts the work in the best light. After all, in our search for value, we want to make sure that we have got hold of the genuine article. However, the version of value-maximization before us cannot guarantee this, because in overriding actual authorial intentions in favour of that which puts the work in a good light, our value-maximizing theorist may take what we would recognize as blunders if we took authorial intentions seriously but which might, under value-maximizing interpretations, make the work appear much better than it really is. (Carroll 2011, p.133)

For instance, a psychoanalytic interpretation of a budget film could find all kinds of hidden meanings that might enhance an interpretation. Later it turns out that the writers had no intention to produce a fascinating, multi-layered analysis of society. At this point the value-maximisers interpretation seems somewhat out of place and vacuous.

I share many of these concerns and in the first two chapters I argue that there is a logical connection between the intentions of the artist and the interpretation of their work. I also discuss the distinction drawn between natural and non-natural meaning, first outlined by Grice (1989) then later by Taylor (2014). For Grice, intentional meaning of the sort we have briefly outlined above is a kind of non-natural meaning. An example of this would be a conversation between two people who intend to convey particular meanings through their words. In contrast, natural meaning refers to the unintentional features of an event that still warrant interpretation. For instance, where we see smoke we know it means fire, but the smoke is not an intentional action. I argue that we should broaden this definition to include any inference we can make about an action not intended by an agent. A person's mannerisms, traits and demeanour betray them and we might make all kinds of inferences about the meaning of their actions that they did not intend to be made. Whilst in some areas this definition of natural meaning is too narrow in other areas it is far too broad. For instance, Taylor's (2014) definition of natural meaning fails to capture the subtle differences between unconscious meanings recovered from the work and basic inferences made about the artist from what they have produced. He says that the category of natural meaning includes "Marxist, Post structural, psychoanalytic and feminist" interpretations (Taylor 2014, p.390). I suggest that there should be a new category which sits between natural and non-natural meaning that deals specifically with parapraxes and other phenomena where the interference of an unconscious or subdued thought provides a reason-based explanation for a person acting in a certain way. The agent does not realise the motivation for their action and so this constitutes an unconscious intention. This kind of meaning does not

really fit in either category as Taylor suggests, because it is a kind of intentional action but the interpretation is symptomatic and therefore methodically similar to the recovery of natural meaning.

Theories that focus on the unconscious are usually confined to the realms of Continental philosophy and they are found predominantly in the work of psychoanalysis. My thesis in Chapter Two is important because it attempts to bridge the gap between the work in analytic philosophy and the ideas in the continental tradition. Analytic philosophy, as a tradition, began at the start of the twentieth century with thinkers such as Bertrand Russell, G.E. Moore, Gottlob Frege and Ludwig Wittgenstein. These thinkers along with many others, believed philosophy should be as impersonal and exact as the sciences. The early analytic school used logic to rigorously analyse philosophical ideas and arguments in order to show that many of the problems which arise in philosophy are largely due to the misleading appearance of surface propositions in ordinary language. Analytic philosophers tend to break problems down into small constituent parts and they place a premium on clarity in argumentation. In contrast, continental philosophy refers to a selection of works that date back much further and came mainly from mainland Europe. The continental style tends to see problems synthetically as part of a bigger picture. Existentialism, Critical Theory, Idealism, Psychoanalysis, Post-structuralism and Marxist derived hermeneutical approaches are all considered to be part of the continental tradition. There has always been a tension between these two styles where continental philosophers have accused analytic philosophy of being trivial (Unger 2014) and the analytic philosophers accuse continental philosophy of being deliberately vague and unthorough (Chomsky 2012, Rorty 1989, Searle 1977). I contend that there are some interesting and important ideas in the continental tradition that have been overlooked because of the stigma attached to them. Instead of ignoring them we should expose them to the rigour of analytic philosophy in order to draw out the important or legitimate claims.

Whilst I consider myself an intentionalist, this term is still very broad. In Chapter Three I investigate the various types of intentionalism in order to locate myself within this broad spectrum. In general, intentionalist theories state that the intentions of the artist are relevant to the interpretation of their work. The *absolute version of intentionalism* claims that the meaning of a work is entirely determined by the intentions of the artist. It views the intention(s) of the artist as both the necessary and sufficient conditions for the work to have meaning. The chief concern with this absolute view is that an author or artist could claim any work means anything and there is no recourse to disagree. To avoid this objection, *extreme actual intentionalism* (Stock 2017) rejects the notion that the authors intentions are infallible, preferring instead that the meaning of a creative work is secured by the intentions of the artist, only if her intentions

conform to one of the possible interpretations of the work. In these cases where the artist's intentions are incompatible with the content of the work, then the work is rendered meaningless (Hirsch 1967). There are many moderate versions of intentionalism with subtle variations between them but one thing they share in common is the view that when the artist's intention fails to be conveyed in their work the meaning is decided by convention.

The two most popular versions of moderate intentionalism defended in the contemporary literature are hypothetical intentionalism (HI) and moderate actual intentionalism (MAI). HI and MAI agree on many interpretive criteria and in most cases, they will arrive at similar interpretations based on the available evidence. For instance, HI and MAI refer to work meaning as utterance meaning as opposed to the meaning of the utterer. Utterance meaning takes into account the context, including the cultural backdrop and any other factors that might help to appropriately situate the work. Both camps agree that the aim of interpretation is to establish the intentions of the artist. However, the point of departure has to do with what constitutes a warranted hypothesis and the truth of the interpretation. MAI believes that private avowals of intention made by the artist should be included in the body of admissible evidence used to form an interpretation even if they are not publicly available (Carroll 2000), whereas HI claims that they should not. The main reason for this is that HI believes the work should be able to stand alone and any meaning successfully conveyed should be recoverable by reference to the work and the publicly available information rather than private pronouncements of intent from the artist. HI rejects these semantic intentions based on the implicit contract between the artist and the audience, because it does not seem fair to ask the interpreter to possess private information about the author (Levinson 1996). Additionally, HI argues all that is required is the best-warranted hypothesis of the artist's intentions by an appropriately informed audience. In Chapter Three I analyse this debate and look at some recent case studies in the literature such as those put forward by Hans Maes (2010) and Gary Iseminger (1992). I then offer a defence of moderate actual intentionalism by appealing to two new test cases. The first case comes from the field of contemporary visual art and a British artist named Matt Sharp who suffers from Tourette's syndrome. I argue that without Sharp's private avowals of intent, which he revealed to me during an interview, we would not necessarily know the thick black lines that cut across one of his paintings were the result of his physical tics and not an intentional feature of the work. Whilst I acknowledge that unintentional features of the work cannot be used to form an explicit defence of MAI, I argue that Sharp's work gives us a way to debunk HI. The second is a test case from literary theory and concerns competing interpretations of *Revolutionary Road* by Richard Yates (2007). *Revolutionary Road* was widely interpreted as an anti-suburban novel until an interview with Yates revealed that this interpretation was not consonant with the intentions of the author. Yates acknowledged that whilst this widely held

interpretation was compatible with the content of the work it was not what he intended for the story. This interview only became publicly available evidence when it was published much later. If we have access to the private avowals of intention made by the artist and those intentions could be a defining factor in deciding between two competing, but equally plausible interpretations of a creative work, it is arbitrary to exclude those private statements of intent made by the artist. On the basis that people are not *usually* mistaken about their intentions, I argue that we should defer to the interpretation that is consonant with the private statements of intent made by the artist.

However, the arguments I make in Chapters Two and Three leave an important question unanswered, namely what should we do when the plausible unconscious interpretation we have formed in light of the available evidence, contradicts the pronouncements of intent made by the artist? An artist will often not be aware of the unconscious features in their own work that we might recover by appealing to contextual factors such as life events or cultural bias. In Chapter Four I argue that this is not an issue for my version of intentionalism because all I am doing is preferencing one form of intention over another or trying to find the unconscious intentions which motivated an action and then simply establishing which of these provides a more plausible explanation for the work as a whole. Unconscious beliefs can also constitute the reason-based explanation for action, but in this case an artist is not aware of the motivations that drive her. In cases where the stated intention offers a more plausible explanation for the content than the unconscious intentions found by the audience, we are obliged to side with the pronouncements made by the artist. However, I offer the case of Apu, a character from American television show *The Simpsons*, to demonstrate that Matt Groening's writing contains unconscious prejudice against the South Asian community that he does not acknowledge. I argue that his denial is not disingenuous, in the sense that he is not knowingly biased, but rather that his prejudice has developed unconsciously and this prejudice can be recovered by analysing his work in context.

Whilst moderate actual intentionalism seems to imply monism, it does not explicitly state that there is one single correct interpretation for any given work. In Chapter Five I argue that there is a single correct interpretation for creative works on the basis that the primary goal of an interpretation should be to recover the intentions of the artist(s). This is not a popular view in the contemporary literature, which seems to find consensus in pluralism. The popular view is critical pluralism, which says that creative works can have many interpretations and these interpretations can be equally legitimate even when they prove to be contradictory. Therefore, pluralism defends the view that we should aim to develop various perspectives of a given work. It comes in many forms but bounded pluralism generally does claim that there are unacceptable

interpretations of a work based on some standards of acceptability. If there were not, there would not be any way of determining whether an interpretation was legitimate. Whilst I do think it is important to explore various possible perspectives of a given work, I believe that interpretations are concerned with meaning and the meaning of a work is *logically tied* to the intentions of the artist. Provided we accept those two premises we should recognize that the goal of an interpretation is to uncover the intentions of the artist. Interpretations could become admissible or inadmissible should new evidence come to light but it is not logically possible to hold contradictory interpretations of a work in tandem. It is clearly possible to hold them in mind but to claim that they are both true simultaneously leads to a contradiction. I argue in Chapters Two and Four that there are also unconscious and natural meanings to be found in creative works and these are also inexorably linked to intentional action and the choices made by the artist in the work. A single comprehensive interpretation should aim to unify all these aspects of meaning where they are relevant and compatible. Chapter Five argues also that there is a difference between acceptable or admissible interpretations and true or correct interpretations. Acceptable interpretations are those that offer a plausible account of the intended, natural or unconscious meanings in the work on the basis of the available contextual evidence. There can be a plurality of contradictory and diverging plausible interpretations, but there cannot be multiple contradictory correct interpretations. This is an important difference. Particular evidence might turn out to be crucial in deciding which interpretations are correct, such as the pronouncements of intent made by the artist or the contextual evidence that rules out other plausible interpretations diachronically, but no evidence can make it the case that two contradictory interpretations can be true in conjunction. Where multiple interpretations of a creative work are present, they must be compatible and able to be joined into one comprehensive interpretation of the work. For the sake of diverse, rich philosophical discussion we should encourage many different plausible interpretations being brought to bear on any given work. However, we must not make the mistake of conflating this with the view that there can be several correct contradictory interpretations. The challenge with using reasonableness as criteria for plausibility is that it is difficult to outline the contours and limits of reasonableness. In other words, it is difficult to say what constitutes a reasonable interpretation without specific stated guidelines. In Chapter Five I offer examples of interpretations that are clearly reasonable, given the content of the work and the available evidence, and I offer examples of interpretations that clearly are not. I argue that I do not need to show exactly where the line should be drawn in order to show that there is a real difference. Additionally, I do not believe this threatens the notion that there are correct interpretations and that these correct interpretations can be brought together to form a single, comprehensive interpretation. All this brings me to the overall view that works have a single correct interpretation and in cases where multiple interpretations are available they must be compatible so that they can come together

to form a single correct interpretation. The best way of arriving at this single correct interpretation is via moderate actual intentionalism. I also believe that unconscious meanings can be recovered from the work by attending closely to the linguistic or artistic clues in conjunction with the publicly available evidence and the statements of the artist. In cases where we find a logical conflict between the conscious and the unconscious intentions of the artist, we must look to establish which interpretation is more compelling and preference one over the other. It can still of course be the case that the best or correct interpretation sees the work as inherently contradictory, where the unconscious thoughts are in tension with the rest of the mind, however, the interpretation would still be a single correct interpretation which seeks to understand the work as inherently contradictory.

1. Defining Intentions

Broadly speaking, intentionalism claims that the intentions of the artist should be a primary consideration in the interpretation of their works, whereas anti-intentionalism claims that the intentions of the artist are largely or wholly irrelevant to this process. With the conflicting opinions that prevail, it is my belief that many philosophers have taken up positions in this debate predicated upon faulty reasoning and unsound definitions. Many intentionalists, particularly those advocates of a more radical intentionalism, are doing their school of thought a disservice by misunderstanding the way in which we interpret works and their meaning. Similarly, many ardent anti-intentionalists have struggled to establish coherent critiques of intentionalist theories by not properly and rigorously defining intentional action in relation to art making.

If we do not take the time to define the key terms then one of two things may happen. Either the arguments and experiments will be badly designed and consequently of no use because the conceptual framework is misleading. For instance, if we adopt a conception of intention, as Wimsatt and Beardsley (1946) do, which explicitly states that intentions are solely a plan or design in the author's mind, later actualised in the work they produce, then we are not in fact talking about intentions at all. On this definition intentions are bracketed away from actions, as mental phenomena preceding them. However, this is quite clearly not the case. When an artist draws a picture or paints on a canvas her action is usually intentional, but no act of "intending" has been added to the action such that it might now be called intentional. The action is intentional in virtue of the way it is performed. "Intentional" is an expression that describes my action rather than an internal action of the mind that precedes it. The belief that intentions were external mental phenomena that distracted from the content of the work, lead proponents of New Criticism to argue that authorial intent was irrelevant in the interpretation of a work, where in truth the intention and the work are inexorably linked.

Another possible consequence of failing to properly define key terminology is that the results of the thought experiment are admissible but the interpretation of those results is inaccurate. For instance, about a decade ago the Bernstein Centre for Computational Neuroscience claimed that they could determine an agent's intentions by studying their mental activity on a brain scan. However, using a framework of multivariate decoding they defined "intention" as "choice-predictive information contained in neural signals leading up to a decision" (Haynes 2011, p.10). In other words, an intention is brain activity, which determined the subjects' likely course of action in the future. It is true that some of this data may be of great interest to

criminology departments worldwide but we have no reason to suppose that this data is evidence for "intention" at all. Take the example of a painter such as Maggi Hambling hard at work on her latest canvas. We would be correct in describing her painting as intentional, but it would be curious to say that each brush stroke is preceded by a mental act of intending. We observe that in her painting many of her bodily movements are intentional. She raises her arm, she looks at the canvas, she washes her paintbrush, she shuffles her feet to get comfortable, her fingers hold the brush in a particular way and so on. On a brain scan, each of these movements would not be recognised by separate pieces of brain activity, called intentions, which precede and predict them. In the field of aesthetics such misconceptions have led to various problems. Schools of thought have been established in opposition to one another, which place varying degrees of emphasis on different aspects of the interpretational process.

The purpose of this chapter is to define the key terms as a base from which to build the rest of my thesis, with particular focus on the nature of intention. It is also important to show how crucial accurate definitions are to philosophical arguments. A failure to properly define intentional action has been problematic for theories in contemporary philosophy of action and in aesthetics. In section 1.1 I will outline a brief etymological history of the word "intention". In section 1.2 I will explore the dualistic conception of intention that is widely held by critics and show that whilst it might be very appealing, it is misguided. In section 1.3 I will explore the contemporary theories of intention proposed by philosophers such as Livingston, Wollheim, Davidson and Bratman in order to show how many of these contemporary theories are guilty of treating intentions as mental states or causes. In section 1.4 I will use the linguistic philosophies of Anscombe and Wittgenstein, whose works have been hugely influential in the contemporary theory of action, as a critique of the contemporary theories outlined in section three. Although they appear later chronologically and are often said to have been influenced by the work of the earlier linguistic philosophers, I argue that the contemporary accounts have overlooked the most important points made in by both Wittgenstein and Anscombe. I will show that intentions are not mental states or phenomena in the brain that precede or cause actions. Instead, I will argue that acting intentionally means acting for reasons, more specifically it means giving a reason-based answer to the question 'Why?' as outlined in Anscombe's work. Actions are understood as intentional because they are performed for reasons but also these reasons explain the action through the agent's perspective. However, this is not enough, it must also be understood that no mental object need be added to the description of an agent's action to make it intentional. It is the description of the action itself taken in context which implies the action was intentional, not the addition of some mental ingredient or causal mental event. In many cases defining intention badly has led to needless debate. I do not wish to reify intentions or instantiate them as mental objects, so in order to give a clearer picture of what

intentions are I will borrow from Kalis (2019) and argue that ultimately intentions can be understood from corresponding patterns in the world. In other words, having the intention to paint a picture means to manifest certain behavioural patterns in the world which are not themselves the intentions, but are indicative of actions that are intentional. Many philosophical problems arise through a failure to properly define the terminology being deployed. In this case the failure to properly define the word "intention" has led to false distinctions in areas of aesthetics.

1.1 The Etymology

We often refer to ourselves and others as having good or bad intentions but we rarely pause to consider what curious vernacular that is. The concept of intention is undoubtedly linked to our actions, thoughts and beliefs. That humans have intentions is a fundamental claim about our moral status and legal relations. However, this was not always the case. The word has undergone an interesting transition.

Originally, from the Latin "intentionem", it was used in reference to "a stretching, straining, exertion, effort or attention." This was connected to the noun of action, "intendere" which would be "to turn one's attention," or more literally, "to stretch out" (Ayto 2011, p.302). In the late 14th Century we find the word "entencioun", which meant the "purpose, design, aim or object; will wish or desire that is intended." This had developed from the Old French word "entencion", which meant "intent, purpose, aspiration or thought." From there we see the late Middle English use of the noun "intention" taken to mean "a thing intended, aim or plan".

Intentions cannot be examined under a magnifying glass, nor can you hold them in your hands, the only way to establish the meaning of "intention" is to look at how the word is used in our language. The uses of the word "intention" in our language are relatively limited. To intend to do something is to have a particular aim or action in mind. We say that a person has good intentions if the *right* sorts of things motivate them. While unintentional events are those which were either unforeseen, or if they were foreseen, have occurred by accident or as a by-product of the intended outcome. It is worth acknowledging that intention is not confined to the individual agent (Facundo 2009, Bratman 1992)[1]. A committee or government may have an intention that no individual has necessarily articulated.

[1] Bratman's (1992) paper titled *Shared Cooperative Activity* argues that shared cooperative activity can be understood as intentional. He says that Shared Cooperative Activity requires three specific properties to count as intentional: Agents must reach consensus and be mutually responsive to the intentions of others, they must intend to carry out the activity and intend to support others in achieving the same goal. Whereas, Alonso Facundo (2009) suggests that joint action is not necessarily normative or descriptive

At first glance it would appear that many uses of the word "intention" could be readily paraphrased without reference to the word at all. This is not to say that intentions are not real, on the contrary, to quote Wittgenstein on another matter, intention is "not a something, but it is not a nothing either!" (Wittgenstein 1953, p.109e). Philosophical questions and confusions surrounding intentions arise with its use in three main forms: expressions of intention, such as "I am going to paint", actions as intentional, such as when someone paints purposefully, and intentions with which actions are performed, such as "I am painting with the intention to sell my work". Anscombe highlighted these issues in the opening remarks of her work on intention,

> [I]t is implausible to say that the word is equivocal as it occurs in these different cases. Where we are tempted to speak of 'different senses' of a word which is clearly not equivocal, we may infer that we are pretty much in the dark about the character of the concept which it represents. (Anscombe 1967, p.1)

1.2 The Dualistic Conception of Intention

When we think of an artwork, such as *The Starry Night*, it is quite natural to assume that Vincent van Gogh wanted to paint the work. Evidence for this assumption is the existence of the work itself. It may be thought that van Gogh must have had an image of the work in his head before he produced it. From here one might draw the conclusion that this mental picture must have, in some sense, caused the artist to paint what he did in the physical world. There seems to be an inevitability about the process, as though we could not possibly draw any other conclusion at each stage. However, a series of shaky philosophical assumptions underwrite this train of thought.

The word "wanted" is a curious one in this context. The artist wants to paint the picture and this seems to involve a prior image, where the image in the mind is the object of the desire. It would not make sense to want something if there was no object wanted. In this sense the image in the mind prior to the art making seems to make sense of the want. But while there is a direct and necessary link between the want and its object, it does not necessarily follow that the object of the want need be a mental representation. We think of the object as a mental image because the notion of wanting is generally used in reference to a single or uniform entity. As a

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and building on the ideas of Bratman he contends that shared intention is a kind of interpersonal obligation. To this end, shared intention is a normative phenomenon that "involves important relations of mutual reliance between the participants" (Facundo 2009, p.446).

consequence even complicated instances of wanting and intending, such as those involved in artmaking, are taken to be synonymous with basic cases, such as wanting food. If the concept of wanting is simplified to that extent, then the claim that mental images precede and cause art suddenly becomes plausible. We find food in the shop and we want to buy it. In this case it is clear that the desire is directly connected to the food object already in existence. The case of artmaking, though, is far more complex because the artist creates the work of art, therefore the work was not already a tangible object as the food was. Both are without doubt cases of wanting, but if the object of the desire is a necessary component for the desire to be talked about coherently, then the work of art must already exist in some sense. Now we enter the dangerous territory where existence seems to be a property that objects have. If the work does not yet exist in the material world then the work must exist in the mental domain.

This view has not been confined to the metaphysics avant-garde, it has actually garnered considerable support in various areas of philosophical discourse. Most famously, Descartes proposes this distinction between mental and physical existence in his *Meditations on First Philosophy* (Descartes 1641) and it continues to underpin many claims in metaphysics and aesthetics to this day. Anselm wrote, "[w]hen a painter considers beforehand what he is going to paint, he has it in his understanding" (Anselm 1078, p.26). Here Anselm is using the term "understanding" to refer to the image in the artist's mind before he paints. The painter and printmaker Albrecht Durer wrote that "a good painter is inwardly full of figures" (Panofsky 1955, p.252) and da Vinci famously wrote, "whatever exists in the universe, in essence, in appearance, in the imagination, the painter has first in his mind and then in his hand" (Da Vinci 1270, p.35). In each of these cases works of art are treated as the external presentations of inner mental pictures.

However, consider an example where it is not clear just from looking whether or not a particular creation was intentional. For instance, the builders responsible for the Suurhusen Church Tower have garnered a curious reputation. Their late medieval steeple in northwest Germany previously held the Guinness World Record for the most tilted tower in the world. However, this fourteenth century church would be completely unknown were it not for a completely unintentional feature of the building. The gothic brick church was built on foundations of oak trees that were being preserved and maintained by water in the marshlands. Later the marshlands were drained and the wood rotted, causing the tower to lean at an angle of 5.19°. The church may have fulfilled the builders' intentions where some of the design features are concerned, for instance, the fortress style windows, the basic size, the roof pattern, the number of floors and the drainage. Nevertheless, it is the position in which the church stands that is so fascinating and this was not part of the intended design.

This particular piece of architecture appears to offer a sharp divide between the prior intention formed in the mind and the resulting work, which differs substantially from those prior intentions in at least one respect. We seem to be able to clearly invoke the intention as some private mental picture that has not managed to actualise itself in the real world. From here it is all-to-easy to export this dualism to other examples in the arts. For example, when I listen to the improvisational jazz of Leszek Mozdzer and Lars Danielsson, I am in awe of their talent and their ability to produce, spontaneously, complex chord progressions through multiple keys. In this case it is tempting to see the musicians playing their instruments as the external product of an internal private intention, which was held prior to the performance in each of their minds. This conception of intention is characterised by the existence of a complete, or nearly formed, picture in the mind of the musician prior to the execution of the work. It seems logical then to suggest the artist had the intention that corresponds to the work. On the basis that intentions are a picture formed in the mind prior to action, we can see how there might be a relationship between the intentions of the artist and the appreciation of their work.

However, all this seems to rely upon a misleading picture of intentions and their relationship to actions. There are many sophisticated discussions (Hagberg 1988, Livingston 2005) about intentions that do not focus on the relationship between a picture in the artist's mind and the physical manifestation of that mental picture which actualises itself in reality. It is not the case that any prior mental picture is necessary in order to perform an intentional action and a complete picture is certainly not required for us to undertake a task intentionally. It may be my intention to write a book without knowing exactly where the story will take me or my intention to make a piece of abstract art guided by my emotions. Nevertheless, even without this final or even rough picture in my mind the movements made by my hands are still intentional and the intentions that guided them are relevant to the interpretation of my work. The previous example of musical improvisation provides the ultimate counterexample to this preconceived picture in the mind. By definition improvisation involves creating music spontaneously and without preparation, but the act of improvising in music is still intentional. The conception of an artist's intention as an embodied image seems to be an unsuitable expression of intentions and that expression has left many critics in a state of confusion. In the next section we will look at some of the contemporary accounts of intention.

1.3 Contemporary Accounts of Intention

Contemporary thinkers have suggested various ways of understanding intentions, but it is now a widely shared assumption that intentions are an irreducible category of mental states.

Livingston (2005) offered the first in-depth study of intention specifically for the purposes of aesthetics. Livingston has adopted a realist position arguing that intentions are bona fide mental states not completely reducible to wishes, beliefs or desires. They are entities with two parts; an *executive attitude* directed towards a *plan*. Intentions are prior to actions chronologically so Livingston concludes that they must (usually) initiate them. Although he acknowledges that they can also guide actions once they have begun.

> In a range of central cases, intentional action amounts to the execution and realisation of a plan, where the agent effectively follows and is guided by the plan in performing actions that, in manifesting sufficient levels of skill and control, bring about the intended outcome. (Livingston 2005, p.14)

Livingston's account is largely inspired by Mele (1992) and Bratman (1987). Bratman developed a planning theory of intention, which makes two significant claims. The first is that intentions are states not reducible to, or analysable in terms of, any fusion of belief and desire as some such as Davidson (1963) have suggested. The second important claim is that intentions are inexorably linked to planning. Bratman has two issues with the belief-desire combination, 1) he believes intentions have particular attributes which are directly connected with action 2) that these attributes are not sufficiently acknowledged by those theories which choose to understand intentions in terms of desire or a combination of belief and desire. In this way Bratman is rejecting reductive theories of intention.

Both Mele (1992) and Wollheim have also warned against conceptions of intention that are too narrow. Although Wollheim has a reductionist view of intentions and does not share the view of many contemporary philosophers, he argues that "at least in the context of art […] intention must be taken to include desires, beliefs, emotions, commitments, wishes" (Wollheim 1987, p.19). According to Wollheim the audience will interpret the intentions just from how the painting looks and this "presupposes a universal human nature in which artist and audience share" (Wollheim 1987, p.19). He qualifies this by saying that an artist need not have the picture in her mind before she paints, which is a claim I would definitely agree with, but for reasons I will explain in the next section I do not agree that intentions are exactly synonymous with beliefs, desires, emotions or commitments.

In contrast, attitude psychologists, such as Fishbein and Ajzen, recognise intentions as meaningful cognitive or motivational states. Fishbein and Ajzen, who pioneered the "Theory of Reasoned Action", define intention as a "person's subjective probability that he will perform some behaviour" (Ajzen & Fishbein 1975, p.12). On this definition, intention becomes largely

synonymous with a particular kind of belief, a belief which is concerned with our future behaviour.

Beardsley (1981) claims that intending to do something requires both a belief that one will achieve it and a desire to do it. The concern here is not necessarily with the former of these two predicates – although many might object to the assumption that intention involves a belief that someone will do something – rather the concern is that the second part of the argument could be considered counter-intuitive in certain circumstances. For instance, there could be cases where an agent wants to do something and indeed believes she will do it, but she does not believe that undertaking the action is a consequence of wanting to. Harman (1986) offered a counter-example of this kind to show where the reductionist logic is vulnerable.

> [S]uppose Jeff is about to blow pepper into Sam's face. If Sam believes he will sneeze as a result of this and if he wants to sneeze, Beardsley's account implies that Sam intends to sneeze and his resulting sneeze is intentional! This strikes me and almost everyone else as clearly wrong. (Harman 1986, p.79)

Donald Davidson has offered another reductionist theory of intentions, which was in part inspired by Anscombe's work. He says that intention is not a mental state or event in the mind but rather a description of what an agent is doing in terms of a primary reason. More specifically he says that reasons that explain intentional actions are best understood as a pair consisting of "pro-attitudes" and beliefs (Davidson 1963, p.5). When an agent acts for a particular reason, a desire-belief pair causes their action. For instance, if someone wants to paint a picture because she wants to depict the view from her window and she believes that putting the brush to the canvas is the best way of achieving that then she intends to paint. Davidson argues that because the woman acts for this reason the pro-attitude coupled with the belief cause her to act.

Later, in his essay *Intending* (Davidson 1978), Davidson realised that this picture of intention could not adequately account for intentions for the future, the sorts of intentions which never actualise themselves such as the author who intends to write a book but never gets around to it. This form of intending, which he calls pure intending, is not the same as intentional action because no action has been performed and this intention might be different to the intention involved in writing the book should this event later come about. One might be drawn into thinking that this is a form of desire rather than intending because one can simply want to write a book but never get around to it. However, there is a clear difference here because one need not want to do something but still intend to do it. For instance, I might not want to take the dog

for a walk later but recognise that I have to and therefore I intend to take the dog for a walk without necessarily *wanting* to. Davidson points out that "once the existence of pure intending is recognised, there is no reason not to allow that intention of exactly the same kind is also present when the intended action eventuates" (Davidson 1978, p.89). In this way Davidson says that intentions for the future are not reducible to intentions in action, instead he concludes that "pure intendings constitute a subclass of […] all-out judgements, those directed to future actions of the agent, and made in the light of his beliefs" (Davidson 1978, p.102).

Thinkers such as Bratman (1987), Mele (1992) and Searle (1983) have argued against reductive accounts of intention like Davidson's by generally showing that intentions have several complex aspects and functions. Since these analyses have demonstrated it is largely impossible to explain intentions simply in terms of beliefs or desires, it is assumed that a non-reductionist approach should be adopted and that we should understand intentions as mental states in themselves. In *Springs of Action*, Mele (1992) aims to give a comprehensive account as to the role of intentions in intentional action. He begins with the causal theories and credits Davidson for many of his early insights. Mele critiques Davidson's belief-desire pair on the grounds that beliefs and desires can be used in both an evaluative and a motivational sense (Mele 1992, 1988). He suggests that this ambiguity opens up the reductive theories of intention to counterexamples, for instance, an artist might feel obliged to paint a controversial piece that makes a political statement, but be more inclined to paint something romantic based on his mood. The former could be said to be an evaluative sense of deeming something to be the preferable course of action, whereas the latter could be argued as the motivational sense. Later in the work Mele concludes that belief-desire models are insufficient because they fail to acknowledge that intentions are the link between reasons for action and action itself. Mele is also critical of minimalist views such the views of Fishbein and Ajzen outlined above. He says these views are too simple because not all intentions are taken to be motivated or caused by a single act of will. Additionally, Mele says that intention cannot be some kind of belief because someone can believe they will end up doing something which they never intend to do. For instance, I might believe my hand will slip and the brush stroke will ruin the canvas but I have no intention of doing so even if it comes to pass. Mele says that intentions cannot be plans either because I might formulate a plan without any intention of carrying it out. Finally, intending cannot be a wish or desire because I can desire something which is out of reach, whereas intending to act requires the possibility that the act is achievable.

Although many of these theories have found inspiration in the linguistic approaches of Anscombe and Wittgenstein, they fail to properly appreciate their significance. Many of these contemporary theories either argue that intentions are mental causes in the brain, that they're

reducible to beliefs, desires (or some combination of the two) or that they are mental states. All of these positions were originally rejected by the linguistic philosophies and I propose that we return to those works if we are to properly understand intentions. In the next section I will use the accounts of Wittgenstein and Anscombe to critique the picture presented by these contemporary views outlined above. I will use these accounts to argue that intentions are not mental states or phenomena, but should be understood as the reason-based explanations of our actions.

1.4 Intentions in Linguistic Philosophy

In this section I will explore the accounts of intention formulated by Wittgenstein and Anscombe. An extensive exposition of these accounts will be valuable both to the wider thesis and the more immediate hypothesis that many have built their arguments on flawed definitions of intentional action. I will use these arguments as a direct criticism of many of the ideas expressed in the contemporary accounts of intentional action, mainly those popular accounts which treat intentions as mental causes or mental states which reside within the brain.

Wittgenstein's influence on twentieth century philosophy cannot be overestimated. His dissolution of philosophical problems into their respective language-games brought clarity and often demonstrated that confusion had arisen through a failure to properly define key terms. His treatment of intentional action and the will is no exception. As a student of Wittgenstein, Anscombe felt he had not given the subject of intention a complete treatment and her subsequent monograph *Intention* is widely considered to be her most influential work. I will begin with the work of Wittgenstein and then move on to look at Anscombe's philosophy.

Fundamentally, Wittgenstein argued that acts of will, such as intending are not inner acts, mental states or processes. They are also not private mental phenomena to which the agent has privileged access. Wittgenstein believed that being in a particular state means exhibiting a number of observable attributes. Not only did Wittgenstein not equate an intention with an experience or a mental state, but he also rejected the idea that intention could be understood as an "emotion, mood, nor yet a sensation or image" (Wittgenstein 1967, p.10e). Understanding intentions means understanding voluntary action more generally in relation to bodily movements.

A voluntary action is not caused by an act of will or an intention. It is true that such an action is intentional and we wanted to act that way, but it is not correct to say that an act of intending caused the action. Many philosophers (Davidson 1978, Bratman 1999, Locke 1846) as well as

many contemporary neuroscientists (Haggard & Libet 2001) are guilty of espousing this view in their work.

> All our voluntary motions… are produced in us only by the free action of thought of our own minds […] For example: My right hand writes, whilst my left hand is still: what causes rest in one, and motion in the other? Nothing but my will, a thought of my mind (Locke 1846, p.414).

Empiricists such as Locke believed that intentions and acts of will are "acts of the mind, directing its thought to the production of any action, and thereby exerting its power to produce it" (Locke 1846, Essay II p. xxi 28). Whilst there are such things as acts of will, Wittgenstein would be reluctant to say that these refer to mental phenomena which in turn cause bodily movements. Instead acts of will refer to situations where a person might go to great lengths to overcome particular difficulties or challenging circumstances such as addiction instances that require particular self-control. These are not mental acts or events called acts of will. Similarly, it is said that we have will-power and that is not a physical ability, but a determination to achieve something in spite of adversity[2]. If willing was a psychological process that caused intentional action then it would have to be a mental act. If it was an act then this act itself would have to be voluntary, because if this inner mental act was not voluntary then the subsequent bodily act would also not be voluntary. For instance, if I trip over by accident and my fall causes someone else to get hurt, it would not follow that I hurt that person on purpose. However, if an act of will were voluntary then we would need another act of will preceding it in order to make sense of it, which would ultimately lead to an infinite regression. We would always need a new mental act of will to explain the previous one. Wittgenstein rejected this notion of willing or intending because he felt that if willing were just another action then it would require an act of will to "bring it about" (Wittgenstein 1953, p.168e). I can bring about the act of drawing by my willingness to draw but there is no act of will that initiates my willingness to act (Bhat 1993, Muhit 2015).

> In the sense in which I can ever bring about anything […], I can also bring about willing. In this sense, I bring about willing to [swim] by jumping into the water. Doubtless I was trying to say: I can't will the willing; that is, it makes no sense to speak

[2] My approach and for my exposition of these theories I am partly indebted to PMS Hacker and our conversations during my Masters year. Particularly in relation to the "Mereological Fallacy," the fallacy of ascribing psychological attributes to the brain that can only intelligibly be ascribed to the person (Bennett & Hacker 2003, p.68).

> of willing willing. "Willing" is not the name of an action, and so not of a voluntary one either. (Wittgenstein 1958, p.159e)

Additionally, if acts of will always occur before, and indeed cause voluntary actions then we should be able to establish the existence of these inner mental phenomena fairly easily, especially with respect to their duration and specific properties. However, Wittgenstein points out that it is difficult to pinpoint exactly when an intention ends or begins. In many cases our intentions change during a particular activity such as art making. Therefore, we are hard pushed to call intending an experience because we cannot identify the specific duration. Wittgenstein also argued that intention could not be found through self-examination, because when we look within we are searching through feelings, memories and experiences (Canfield 1993).

> "I had the intention of…" Does not express the memory of the experience. (Any more than "I was at the point of…") (Wittgenstein 1967, p.10e)

Consider the example of someone drawing a picture. The artist completes the drawing and thinks back to the intention behind the work. When we talk about the 'intention' we are not remembering an experience, instead, the intending fades away when I remember what happened. Wittgenstein adamantly restates several times that this process of intending is not a mental state. He uses the example of building a machine and the intention behind it. Upon examining a machine we can see the purpose for which it was intended but that is not the same as the numerous mental representations and propositional attitudes involved in a mental state. In *Zettel*, he explains that when we speak of broken machines or appliances we talk about the purpose for which they were intended to be used. When we talk about a broken clock for example we say that it was intended to be used as a device to tell the time, but if this is a legitimate use of the word intention then it seems unlikely that intention is being used here to describe a mental state.

> In what circumstances does one say "This appliance is a brake, but it doesn't work"? That surely means: it does not fulfil its purpose. What is it for it to have this purpose? It might also be said: "It was the intention that this should work as a brake." Whose intention? Here intention as a state of mind entirely disappears from view. (Wittgenstein 1967, p.10e)

We regularly act because we want or intend to do so, either because we feel like it or for some other more specific reason. However, it is mistaken to think that this reason for acting is causal. If it was then after the intention was formed our bodies would be forced into action and we

would merely be observers, but this is not the way it is. Suppose I intend to begin work on my painting at seven o'clock. I do not simply hear the clock chime seven and notice my arm rise to grab the paintbrush and meet the canvas. Furthermore, intentions cannot be considered synonymous with acts of will either because they are not actions in themselves. It is true that we intend to do things but it is not a desire or a mental action that causes certain bodily movements. We might form an intention to do something but we have not yet done it nor has some unstoppable process been set in motion through our intention forming.

One reason that intention is mistakenly thought of as a mental phenomenon is that the proposition "P intends to" is considered to be a description of a person's state of mind. If "P intends to" is a description of that person's mind then "I intend to" must also be a description of one's own state of mind. Consider the sentence "P intends to Q" is true, if and only if, P does in fact intend to do Q. If P says, "I intend to do Q" then it may be true or false. It is true only if P intends to do Q. The truth of both sentences is dependent on the same fact. We should conclude that these sentences say the same thing. This forms the basis for a rather dubious epistemic position. If "I intend to" is the same description as "he intends to", then it would seem to be one that is supported by this evidence. So long as it is true I may claim it to be the case. However, in order to test the truth or falsity of the proposition I must be able to verify it. This is going to be done through introspection; drawing on similarities to other things I am aware of. If this process of inward searching is to be the means of verification then we have a problem when it is applied in the third-person context. When those statements are said of someone else, I cannot easily compare them with my own experiences and thoughts (Hacker 1997)[3].

If we are to correct this mistake and establish what has gone wrong, we must divorce ourselves from the notion that "[t]he purpose of the proposition [is] to convey to one person how it is with another" (Wittgenstein 1953, p.111e). The problem here is that intentions are not descriptions of a particular state of mind. To describe my state of mind and to describe my painting is not to deploy concurrent uses of the word "describe". When I describe my painting I point out its visual and textual features, I can recognise or fail to recognise what is seen. On the other hand, this does not apply to sentences such as "I intend to". They do not rely on perception and internal investigation does not help us to find information relating to our intentions. We do not check what we intend by examining more closely, as we do when we describe the painting. Close examination of evidence does not make the question, "why do you

[3] Although intentions themselves are not synonymous with descriptions, we will see later in section four how we can make inferences about intentions through our descriptions of actions.

believe you intend to do that?" any less bizarre, because you do not believe you intended to do something, but rather you did it and your action was intentional. None of this precludes a description of a state of mind, of course, but these examples serve to show subtle changes in the language-games. Intending is not a state of mind and what one intends is never to describe an agent's state of mind.

> You couldn't call moaning a description. But this shows you how far the proposition 'I have toothache' is from a description… In 'I have toothache' the expression of pain is brought to the same form as a description 'I have five shillings. (Wittgenstein 1968, p.262)

There is a distinction to be made here between conscious and unconscious intentions. While it might seem curious to suggest that I could incorrectly identify my own conscious intentions, by definition we might have to investigate to establish our unconscious intentions. I will expand upon this idea in the next chapter but for now it should simply be noted that this is still not a kind of introspection. When we search to establish unconscious intentions we are still looking to our actions and the appropriate contextual considerations to guide our investigation. When we get clarity on this issue we realise that the general purpose of the sentence "I intend to" is not to pass on an item of knowledge to others, because intentions are not found through introspection and then later described for others.

> [W]e are so much accustomed to communicating in speech, in conversation, that it looks to us as if the whole point of communicating lay in this: that someone else grasps the sense of my words – which is something mental: he as it were takes it into his own mind. If he then does something further with it as well, that is no part of the immediate purpose of language. One would like to say "It is through my communicating it that he comes to know that I am in pain; it produces this mental phenomenon; everything else is immaterial to the communicating". As for what this remarkable phenomenon of knowledge is – that can be taken care of later. Mental processes just are strange. (It is as if one said, "The clock shows us the time. What time is, is not yet settled. And as regards the point of telling the time – that doesn't come in here.") (Wittgenstein 1953, p.121e-122e)

When an artist begins to draw, we should not say that the artist is bestowing a piece of information about his intention to another. We are not taught to recognise a mental phenomenon of intending that we subsequently describe using the word "intend". Bhat points out that:

> It is always appropriate to ask the question: 'What do you intend to do?' whenever someone says 'I intend to…' (Bhat 1993, p.290)

The fact that "intend to" is always followed by a verb suggests that intention and action are inexorably linked. To say that I had a certain intention is to speak about oneself and how we act rather than speaking about intention as an act in itself. As Wittgenstein himself points out,

> Why do I want to tell him about an intention too, over and above telling him what I did? –Not because the intention too was something going on at that time. But because I want to tell him something about myself, which goes beyond what happened at that time. I reveal to him something about myself when I tell him what I was going to do. (Wittgenstein 1953, p.176e §659)

"Intending to do *p*" and "meaning to do p" are discussed at the end of Part one in the *Philosophical Investigations*. The discussion of both is linked with his commentary on voluntary powers but often misunderstood as with discussions of the will and mental states. Intending or meaning to do something is not determined by thoughts or ostensive acts and Wittgenstein says that intentional verbs are not the same as activities, events or ideas in the mind or brain. His main argument against talking about intentional verbs in this way is that he believes intentions do not have "duration" (Wittgenstein 1967, p.16e). In other words, whilst it appears that meaning something requires an agent to direct his attention to it, in actual fact no such act takes place. Consider a person who is feigning injury. If an agent pretends to be in pain, then says "it will soon subside" then she can be said to mean, "the pain will subside," even if there is no actual pain to attend to. Meaning something is not a mental activity any more than the increasing value is an activity of a house. Perhaps an even more basic illustration of this lack of duration might be to return our example of intending to write a book one day. It seems odd to say that the duration of the intention is the time it took to write the book and so intentions can be spoken about meaningfully without having genuine duration.

Wittgenstein's other argument is that mental processes are not necessary for "intending or meaning something" (Glock 1996, p.179). There are correlations that are of interest to psychologists, but the internal thoughts or mental process do not determine what an agent intends or means. The sentence "I meant what I said" does not report an observation as a result of introspection, it is a way of showing that I am sticking to the sentiment in my previous utterance. Earlier in the chapter we discussed the dualistic conception of intention where a picture in the mind occurs before the artist paints. Wittgenstein argues that intentions are not

bound to pictures in the mind because any image can cross one's mind when one intends to do something.

Wittgenstein's rejection of the notion that intentional attitudes are mental states or processes is often described as an example of contemporary externalism (Child 2010) or, in its time, philosophical behaviourism. According to externalism, to determine what an agent intends one needs to refer to external factors rather than internal psychological factors. Wittgenstein discusses three criteria we can use to determine intentional attitudes.

(i) Avowals of intention – An agent's intention is not determined by anything in her mind at the time, rather it is shown by her expressions of intent. He says that "anyone who sees the expression of an expectation will just see the what is being expected" (Wittgenstein 1953, p.139e).

(ii) Explanations of intention – What an agent means is shown when she explains or justifies her utterances. Wittgenstein gives the examples of pointing at a man to refer to him. He says that "of course there is a connection between my talk and him, but this connection resides in the application of the talk, not in an act of pointing." (Wittgenstein 1967, p.5e)

(iii) Context of intentional action – The context surrounding what an agent meant "especially on about whom [they] had a reason to speak" (Glock 1996, p.181)

Unlike other externalists though, Wittgenstein acknowledges the importance of first-person insights because, most of the time, we are not as individual agents mistaken about what we intend or mean. I agree with Wittgenstein's analysis here and one of the unique challenges in my thesis is to show how I might reconcile these various beliefs about intentions. Having resisted the idea that establishing our own intentions involves a process of introspection, the reader could be forgiven for thinking that this most recent endorsement of Wittgenstein's ideas is my way of smuggling introspection back into the discussion. However, this is not the case. Intentions do not require introspection, but that is not say that we do not know when we act intentionally. One knows when one acts intentionally but that is not the same as introspection. It is true to say that we might need to look more closely at our actions in order to understand those unconscious motivations which drive us, but I will develop this position in the next chapter. Furthermore, first-person insights are not the same introspection. To see how that is the case, we need to look at Anscombe's theory of intentional action.

The later Anscombian model of intentional action builds on and clarifies some of Wittgenstein's earlier work. Although Anscombe clearly assimilated much of Wittgenstein's

philosophy there are clear points of departure which separate their philosophies. Anscombe's theory of intention can be summarised as follows. Causative actions and reactions occur in all physical objects but if there were no difference between human behaviour and this general process of cause and effect then discussions about intention and unintentional actions would be largely meaningless. Anscombe is acutely aware that our discussions about deliberate human behaviour, such as Maggi Hambling painting, are starkly different to our discussions about the plant that grows. In particular it makes sense to ask why Maggi Hambling is painting and to expect a certain kind of response, where the same kind of explanation would not be appropriate for the plant growing. The plant is not motivated grow rather than to wither and photosynthesis is not a choice the plant decides to undertake. This distinction is true even within the range of human behaviour. For instance, a different kind of explanation might be offered for the artist painting than for the person who has indigestion. The person who has indigestion might know that her indigestion was caused by eating her lunch too quickly but this is not the same kind of explanation as the reason why the artist painted. It does make sense to ask people why they acted a certain way and Anscombe believed that this kind of questioning was the key to understanding intentional action. She was interested in the reasons people give for their actions and what their purpose was for acting in certain ways. For Anscombe questions about the intentions directly relate to the meaning of actions, which is a view shared by the intentionalist art critics.

In Anscombe's philosophy, the crucial factor that separates questions about causation from questions about intention is that whilst the woman might not know what caused her indigestion, she cannot be similarly ignorant of her intentions. The woman could form a hypothesis that her indigestion was caused by the food she ate at dinner but she does not need to form a hypothesis in the same way to explain her painting. Her intention to paint does not express some prediction about what she will do when she picks up the brush. Rather, it is a fact about the action she is undertaking. Various descriptions of what she is doing might also hold true, such as she is sitting cross-legged in front of the canvas, her head is tilted to one side, the stool is creaking as she shifts in the seat. However, the statement of intent, in which the artist explains what she is doing, will surely be the most revealing for anyone who wants to understand her action. Anscombe believes that ultimately all actions have a teleological structure in so far as they go through various phases of what an agent is doing. Actions have what she refers to as an A-B-C-D structure, which is to say that B,C and D give an answer to why a person is "A-ing" (Stoutland 2014, p.27).

According to Anscombe intentional actions are part of the "class of things known without observation" (Anscombe 1967, p.14). An intentional action makes sense because it is

undertaken for reasons and as a consequence, intentional actions demand a particular kind of reason-based answer to the question 'Why?'. The special use of the question 'Why?' identifies our intentional actions because, in response, an agent who has acted intentionally can honestly say that the answer is something more than meets the eye.

> The answer that I shall suggest is that they are the actions to which a certain sense of the question 'why?' is given application… the answer if positive, gives a reason for acting. (Anscombe 1967, p.9)

When we ask the question 'Why?' we can expect an answer that is not simply causal but one that illuminates the meaning behind the action for the agent. However, Anscombe doesn't simply say that acting intentionally is synonymous with acting for reasons, because she says that in some rare cases, one might act intentionally but when asked, respond by saying that they performed the intentional action for no particular reason at all. Instead, some consideration, such as a motivation or belief, becomes one's motivating reason for action, because the agent stands in some relation to it. As a consequence, the action makes sense from the agent's perspective. To answer the question 'Why?' by providing a motive-in-general, means "[t]o explain one's own actions by an account indicating a motive [putting] them in a certain light" (Anscombe 1967, p. 21). Here I equivocate on the Anscombian conception of intention, largely because I do not believe that "seeing them in a certain light" has to always be from the agent's perspective. In Chapter Two I will argue that actions can still be intentional even if the agent is not aware of the motive which guided their actions.

Just as we explored with Wittgenstein, Anscombe says these intentions are not the cause of actions, partly because it makes sense to speak of intentions upon which you never act, such as the person who intends to write a book but never gets around to it. Also, there is a distinction between causes and their effects, for instance, if I throw my paint pot at the wall that will be the cause of the effect, namely that paint will spray everywhere. In contrast, there is no such separation between intentional actions and the intentions they contain. Let us consider an example that illustrates this. Imagine an artist is painting and she has spent hours on a beautiful landscape. Realising the precarious nature of this procedure and that even the slightest slip could ruin it, a moment of madness overcomes her and she destroys the painting. This is an intentional act of destruction. Now suppose a different situation in which the artist accidentally slips and tears through the canvas, this is clearly unintentional. However, imagine a third scenario where the artist considers this act of madness but manages to restrain herself, a moment later she slips and accidentally tears through the canvas anyway. In this third case the thought which occurred prior to the act of accidentally tearing through the canvas did not cause the act

to take place. One might argue that this third case is a case of what Freud would have called a *Fehlleistung* or parapraxis, which in layman's terms is a Freudian slip. Whilst I agree this is a possibility and indeed it is a phenomenon I am particularly interested by in this thesis, we also need to acknowledge that there are genuine cases of accident. The artist may simply have had a leaking water pot and her foot slipped in the puddled which had formed on the floor. It is at least possible that the tear in the canvas was an accident and not the result of some unconscious motivation. In Chapter Two I will develop my account of unconscious intentions and further elaborate the difference.

This explains why intentions are important when trying to understand the meaning behind someone's actions but it still does not clearly establish what intentions actually *are* for Anscombe. Anscombe observes that intention appears in our language in various different ways, but we seem to make three particular conceptual distinctions: Expressions of intention, intentions in action and intentions with which actions are performed. She is wary of focusing too narrowly on one for fear of making general claims, which then fail to qualify for the other two. The first of these describes what we are intending to do. In analysing intentions for the future, Anscombe says that we are not making predictions, because we can say that 'it might snow at Christmas' without expressing an intention. When we justify intentions to act she says we give "reasons why it would be useful or attractive if the description came true, not by evidence that it is true" (Anscombe 1967, p.6). It is in this discussion that Anscombe forms a slightly dubious position that becomes the basis for Davidson's later reductive philosophy. She says that whilst both predictions and intentions to act seems to require some kind of belief about the future, only one of them expresses a desire for a particular state of affairs to come about. This is where the belief-desire pair has its origins and, for reasons already discussed, Bratman (1987) and others are rightly critical of this model.

Intentions in action provide an explanation for the action. This is where her discussion as to the difference between reasons and causes arrives, which we have already outlined above. Intentions do not cause bodily actions, but they provide reasons for them. Anscombe argues that an action can be intentional under one description but not under another. For instance, Jackson Pollock is famous for his technique of dripping or pouring paint onto a horizontal canvas so that he can see the work from all angles. This often results in a rather chaotic abstraction on the canvas. Suppose that Pollock uses his brush to flick paint the canvas to add detail and these gestures result in a particular pattern, we would surely conclude that this action was intentional. However, now suppose that while Pollock is painting he is disturbed by a phone call. Whilst talking to his friend on the phone his still holding the brush and gesturing in response to the conversation. Without realising he is splashing paint from the still paint

covered brush onto the canvas in a similar way as before, but this action is not intentional. Here some bodily movement in one situation is intentional but in another is not even when the result is the same.

This discussion is reminiscent of Wittgenstein's discussions of action description. One particular quote widely considered to have been a central catalyst in the contemporary theoretical approaches is found in the *Philosophical Investigations*.

> But there is one thing we should not overlook: when 'I raise my arm', my arm rises. And now a problem emerges: what is left over if I subtract the fact that my arm rises from the fact that I raise my arm? (Wittgenstein 1953, p.169e)

Here Wittgenstein is trying to establish what it is that turns behaviour into intentional action. However, the question left begging by Wittgenstein's interlocutor[4] is a category error (Ryle 1976), one that he highlights in order to criticise in his trademark style. A category error is one in which an object or concept is attributed to one category when it belongs in another. Ryle argued that it was an error to treat the mind as an immaterial substance because it refers to a collection of capacities which themselves are not substances. This does not require a complete metaphysical account of intention and subsequently a theory of action from neuroscientists, rather it needs clarity to understand what is actually going on here in the language. First, we must analyse the problem again, paying particular attention to the standard solutions.

We are often tempted to say that the difference between me raising my arm and my arm being raised is an act of will on my part. In relation to the former I intended to raise my arm, whereas in the latter I did not. More specifically, referring back to Anscombe earlier on, in the case of the former I acted for reasons but in the latter I did not. Whilst this may not be an issue when generally distinguishing between intentional and unintentional action, it is an issue when we try to interpret the description of intending to do something as stipulating a naturally occurring mental cause. Unfortunately, we find in the literature that many contemporary philosophers of action have taken this as an explicit challenge by Wittgenstein. They have set off in search of this missing ingredient like some philosophical Jabberwocky that when added to the involuntary action results in the intentional act of raising my arm. However, if intending is an act performed intentionally, such as when I turn my attention toward an activity or focus intently on something, then we seem to have a problem. Where we required an explanation of

[4] Wittgenstein often employs a kind of *Socratic method* where he argues with an interlocutor (himself) in order to draw out misconceptions in philosophical discourse.

intention in the first instance, we require one again to explain the initial cause. If intending is an action in itself then it is difficult to establish what manner of intention made the act of intending come about. Any attempt to argue that intentional actions are preceded by acts of intending will involve an infinite regression and spurious line of reasoning.

Anscombe generally rejects the view that intentions are mental states or mental phenomena. If intentions were mental phenomena which caused our actions then it would be possible to be unaware of our intentions. In the next chapter I will argue that this aspect of Anscombe's philosophy is mistaken because we can have unconscious intentions where we are not aware of our reasons for acting a certain way because they are buried or repressed. I agree with Anscombe that one cannot intend to do something of which they have no conception and I agree that in general we are not mistaken about our own intentions, but there are cases in which subconscious motivations were the true driving force behind our actions and these actions can still be described as intentional. Anscombe describes these as subconscious actions as opposed to intentional actions, but I believe many of these are a class of unconscious intentional action.

Understanding the behaviour of others often does not come from brain scans and such a pursuit would be misguided, especially with respect to intentions. Understanding intentional actions means understanding what an agent takes herself to be doing or more generally the reasons for which she performed the action. Anscombe says that we do not have to observe our actions to have knowledge of our intentions, we know without observation what we are doing and how we are trying to achieve it. Indeed, we know what we are doing even if it is not going to plan, just as the artist knows what she is doing even if her painting is not exactly as she had hoped.

Anscombe also argues that intention is not a predicate of something, in the same way that existence is not a predicate.

> [A]n action is not called 'intentional' in virtue of any extra feature which exists when it is performed […]. Let us suppose that there is such a feature, and let us call it 'I'. Now the intentional character of the action cannot be asserted without giving the description under which it is intentional, since the same action can be intentional under one description and unintentional under another. It is however something actually done that is intentional. (Anscombe 1967, p.28)

You cannot take intention away from an action and be left with other properties like you can with other objects. You can take property of being red away from a book by colouring it black but an action is either intentional or it is not, you cannot subtract the intentional property from

the action. Actions are intentional in virtue of the way they are performed, not because of some extra feature has been added that defines them as intentional. Understanding intention as a predicate or property has had implications in the broader literature.

Anscombe's view can be understood as follows; an action is intentional because it demands a certain response to the question 'Why?'. The answer to this question is the reason for action and it explains the action by showing what made sense of the action from the agent's perspective. Crucially, reasons do not explain the intentional actions by causing them. This account of acting for reasons stands in contrast to the popular Davidsonian view. Anscombe believes that reasons for action are answers to the question 'Why?' in the sense that they call for the agent's interpretation of what they are doing. Motives make clear that our reasons for action make sense of the intentional action from the agent's perspective.

Many anti-intentionalists and non-intentionalists have made this mistake in their criticism by thinking that intention is a property of art that you can bracket away from the work itself. Huddleston (2016), for example, asked why we should be forced to accept intention as an additional interpretative constraint and reject others in favour of a narrower understanding of the artwork. Huddleston argued that one option is to interpret the work itself as it stands alone and another option is to interpret the work plus the intention together. He states that the burden of proof rests with the intentionalist to show why we should interpret the latter and not the former. However, this is to misunderstand the nature of intentional actions like painting and drawing. It is not that some extra property is added to drawing to make it intentional, it is that drawing is itself an intentional action. Your action is intentional because you were deliberate in performing it rather than the action needing a separate mental component to qualify as intentional. The intentionalist should not recognise the work plus the intention as a legitimate view of the object they are interpreting. The reason we generally side with the intentions of the artist in the search for a valid interpretation is that these intentions are a way of deciding between various possible interpretations presented to the critic or audience by the content of the work alone. We would not think it fair to assign just any meaning to the words of a person in conversation, so when a number of options present themselves we try to establish what the speaker intended to say. This does not mean that we are interpreting their speech plus their intentions, rather their speech is intentional and we should try to understand the intended meaning in context.

Whilst I agree with Anscombe that the uses of the word "intention" in our language cannot be considered equivocal in every case, I don't feel the need to unite these uses in the same way that other philosophers have. To understand the meaning of the word "intention" is simply to

understand all its possible uses in our language and then see how it is applied in each individual case or context. There is also a sense in which we must understand how they *hang together*, demonstrating the unity and diversity of intention. I have intentions for the future that I may or may not undertake, I act intentionally when I act for reasons – this is a description of the action in a particular context and I have intentions that are directed toward a particular end or goal. For the purposes of our discussion in art I should like to take from this that intentions are not mental phenomena and they do not cause actions to occur. Intentional actions are those for which a certain application of the question 'Why?' applies, namely the application which demands a reason-based answer. When we are establishing the intentions of the artist we are therefore establishing the reasons why she acted in a certain way, and these reasons make sense of her action from her perspective.

Readers may still be concerned at this point that I have offered suggestive ideas about the nature of intentions but not sufficiently developed them as a comprehensive definition and so further elucidation is needed. My chief reason for this underdevelopment stems from a desire to avoid the reification or instantiation of intentions as mental objects. Keeping this in mind, I will now try to say a little more about how we can construe intentions beyond this reason-based explanation for action.

Kalis (2019) argues that the Wittgensteinian concept of intention "is to understand the ascribing of intentions as a form of pattern recognition, leading to the criterion that someone truly has an intention *if and only if* a certain pattern is present in the world" (Kalis 2019, p.5).

At this point then, I will borrow from Kalis and argue that Wittgenstein's view of intention can be understood in terms of pattern recognition. This means that when we say "the artist intended to paint that picture" it is true in virtue of corresponding patterns in the world (Wittgenstein 1982). These patterns are not the intentions, but rather the presence of certain patterns indicates when an agent might be acting with intention or intentionally. This is important because it reinforces the point made earlier that intentions do not cause actions and that they cannot simply be reified or instantiated as objects in the world.

Let us consider the example of the artist painting a little more closely in order to see this in practice. The artist intends to paint that picture insofar as she prepares the canvas, goes to get paint, sets up her easel, allocates time for the endeavour and answers questions about what she will create. This list is by no means exhaustive but by looking at it we can deduce a number of things. 1) The pattern which forms the basis for the artist's intention consists of a variety of elements, none of which alone is central for the ascription of intention. (In this way patterns of

intention might have family resemblances to one another which crisscross and overlap rather than a fixed set of necessary and sufficient conditions which form the basis for intention.) There may be situations which cause conflict, for instance, the artist might forget that she booked a lunch appointment to see her friend, however, we can deduce by looking at the other elements taken together that this was a mistake. Conflicts like this might create ambiguity where agents can be said to have in-between intentions (Schwitzgebel 2002). In these cases, there is no clear fact of the matter demonstrating whether the artist intends to paint or not, it is indeterminate. Various Wittgensteinian philosophers such as McDowell (1992) and Ter Hark (2001) have argued that this is not a threat for the theory but rather an indication that the mental life of humans is complex and often ambiguous.

1.5 Conclusion

Given the extensive exegesis of intention in the history of philosophy, especially the contributions of Wittgenstein and Anscombe, it is perhaps surprising that the more modern accounts of intention in the field of aesthetics seem to struggle against the same criticisms as their predecessors. When Locke was formulating his account of intention it might have been reasonable to suppose that intentions cause actions or that intentions were states of mind, but the interventions of linguistic philosophy have surely put significant question marks over this notion. Davidson and Mele amongst others claim to have been influenced heavily by the work of Anscombe but many of their philosophical commitments trespass overtly on the picture that intention is a biological explanation for the causes of action. There is obviously a sense in which philosophers such as Livingston have developed an account that is simple and functional for the purposes of the discussions in art and these contemporary philosophers might argue that when we discuss intentionalism we do not need to flesh out such a detailed exposition of intention and we can have the relevant arguments without it. However, we have seen in this chapter that there are considerable issues with building an account of intentionalism on a flawed definition of intention. For instance, we could not justify an argument for intentionalism on the basis that intentions are synonymous with predictions. The predictions of the artist regarding what they might produce are not inherently relevant to the interpretation of her work. Equally, criticising the relevance of artistic intention on a dubious definition of intention brings about the same problems. Arguing against intentionalism on the grounds that intentions are thoughts or plans in the artist's mind that appear prior to the act of art making is an informal fallacy. On this model intentions are bracketed away from actions and treated as an accompaniment to actions. Divorcing intentions from art making in this way makes it easy to criticise intentionalism, because again the intentions would not be relevant to the meaning of the work, or certainly less relevant than, say, the linguistic conventions. Philosophers such as

Wimsatt and Beardsley who propose such criticisms are guilty of setting up straw man arguments. When we understand that intentions and actions are inexorably linked we see that our intentions are essential to understanding the meaning of our actions. Whether or not hurting someone is intentional or accidental is the defining factor in determining the moral status of the action. Since art making is an action it follows that intention will also play a significant role in determining meaning.

What I have proposed in this chapter is a return to the work of linguistic philosophy to provide a comprehensive basis for intentional action and action description. I argue that we should move away from psychological conceptions of intention and any account which deems intention to be a biological mechanism or even a psychological phenomenon which causes bodily movements. The picture that motivates this kind of thought is a powerful one, it supposes that when I take away my arm rising from me raising my arm, something must be left. It is all too often argued that the something left over must be an entity or a mental state; this is what most people have called an intention. I have argued this picture is fatally flawed and based on a misunderstanding. Philosophers seem determined to define intentions into existence as though they must refer to something concrete or tangible. We understand an action as intentional based on whether or not it satisfies a reason-based answer to the question 'Why?' and whilst intentions do not *exist* as entities, there are real matters of fact regarding what someone intends to do. Following Kalis (2019) I have also argued that these matters of fact can be understood by looking at patterns of behaviour in the world which give us a sense of what an agent intended to do. In the following chapters I will refer to this account of intention and the various foundations upon which it is built.

2. Meaning, Interpretation and the Unconscious

In the field of aesthetics, interpretation is usually understood as the investigation into the meaning of a work of art. Whilst investigating meaning, there is a propensity in aesthetic theory – especially in the analytic tradition – for interpretation to focus on what are taken as the intentional features of a given work. The interpreter is predominantly concerned with issues such as whether or not the structure or various features of the work have been chosen to create a particular artistic effect and whether words, forms and phrases are deliberately deployed as allegory, metaphor or irony. When we interpret a painting, sculpture or literary work it is this kind of interpretation we engage with.

Consensus on this point has changed over the years. When Wimsatt and Beardsley (1946) published their paper titled *The Intentional Fallacy*, conventional wisdom was beginning to shift toward the view that intention was not necessarily a key criterion for the interpretation of art. Since then the debate has evolved and raised other questions surrounding the relationship between the artist and her work. These include but are not limited to, how the intended meaning should be understood and whether or not we should construct an implied figure to better understand a work, rather than attributing the intentions to the actual artist or author.

In the next chapter I shall return to address these questions in more detail but first I want to argue that there are two other types of meaning available for interpretive practice, which have been somewhat neglected in aesthetic theory. These are natural meaning and unconscious meaning. Whilst intentional meaning of the kind characterised above is undoubtedly important, any interpretation that focuses exclusively on these features cannot be considered complete. Such a narrow view fails to acknowledge important aspects of meaning that are relevant to the interpretation of artworks.

In order to explore this, I will build on the work of Herbert Paul Grice who has broadly outlined the distinction between natural and non-natural meaning. Grice was an analytic philosopher primarily concerned with semantic meaning in the philosophy of language, but I believe his work has much wider implications for the field of aesthetics. Taylor (2014) has already argued for the importance of natural meaning as a consideration in literary theory, but I want to develop these ideas further. Previously natural meaning has been used to describe features of events or objects, from which we can infer meaning. For instance, smoke means fire or grey skies mean rain. More recently (Taylor 2014) however the definition has been broadened to include Marxist and Freudian derived hermeneutical approaches often referred to as Deep

Interpretations. In this chapter I will argue that natural meaning does not adequately capture those unconscious features, which present as parapraxes in the work, because they are still in some sense intentional. I argue that a third category should be introduced as an intermediary, since the current division between natural and non-natural meaning does not adequately cover the whole terrain. This category recognises that unconscious intentions can be recovered from the work but these interpretations are symptomatic, therefore they require similar interpretive methods to natural meaning.

In section 2.1 I will briefly map out the philosophical landscape and explain the difference between natural and non-natural meaning. In section 2.2 I explore some of the reasons that natural meaning has been neglected especially in mainstream analytical philosophy. I argue that vague language coupled with a lack of rigour in areas of the continental tradition has relegated it to a secondary consideration in the discussion about interpretation.

There has long been a divide in both method and content between analytic philosophy and the more continental style. The analytic approach sees complex problems broken down into manageable parts, which allows for a more detailed exegesis or argument. In contrast continental philosophy tends to locate problems in a bigger picture as it were, trying to understand the issues in a much broader context. The continental tradition is so called because it is associated with the writings of continental Europe, particularly France and Germany and philosophers such as Husserl. Whilst continental philosophy has changed over time, many consistent strands have survived. Continental writing often focuses on phenomenological descriptions of the world and tries to treat problems synthetically as part of a wider whole.

One criticism levelled at continental philosophy is that in trying to deal with broad questions it often lacks the clarity, concreteness, and rigour to be logically sound. Definitions of concepts might be taken for granted, with arguments based on assumptions because there is not the room to explore every aspect in detail. For instance, Derrida is a revered continental philosopher who has received substantial criticism for deliberate obfuscation, misinterpretation and demonstrating inadequate levels of scholarship in his writing (Scruton 2004, Evans 1991, Searle 1977, Gross & Levitt 1994). Hegel is another famous continental figure who found himself the target of early analytic philosophers such as Russell and G.E. Moore, who sought to distance themselves from the idealism which had characterised the 19th century. Rockmore notes “the utter disdain, even contempt for Hegel that runs like a red thread through Anglo-American analytic philosophy since it emerged in England at the turn of the 20th century” (Rockmore 2005, p.2). Schopenhauer also wrote of Hegelian philosophy that it was "a colossal piece of mystification, which will yet provide posterity with an inexhaustible theme for laughter

at our times, that it is a pseudo-philosophy paralyzing all mental powers, stifling all real thinking, and, by the most outrageous misuse of language, putting in its place the hollowest, most senseless, thoughtless, and, as is confirmed by its success, most stupefying verbiage" (Schopenhauer 1840, pp.15-16). Here Schopenhauer is accusing Hegel of obscuritanism, the practice of deliberately obscuring the presentation of information to limit further understanding (Boudry & Buekens 2014).

In 1996, Alan Sokal perpetrated a hoax in order to demonstrate that some academic journals in the continental tradition lacked intellectual rigor. The text titled, *Transgressing the Boundaries: Towards a Transformative Hermeneutics of Quantum Gravity* (Sokal 1996a), was published in the journal *Social Text*, which is a journal of postmodern cultural studies. Sokal aimed to demonstrate that some journals would publish articles that were essentially nonsense if the author deployed technical terminology and vaguely appealed to the ideological dispositions of the editors and the readership (Sokal 1996b). These examples highlight a legitimate concern about the continental tradition but that should not mean that we abandon the ideas altogether. This chapter aims to look at important ideas explored in the continental tradition through the lens of analytical philosophy. In section 2.3 I will look at specific examples in an effort to show how we might recover natural meaning from a given work. In section 2.4 I will briefly look at the implications natural meaning could have for the debate between hypothetical and moderate actual intentionalism. Whilst I want to leave a full exposition of this debate until the next chapter it would be remiss of me leave out such relevant details at this stage. I will argue that natural meaning bypasses the need for an implied figure, which is invoked by some hypothetical intentionalists. In section 2.5 I will outline my argument for the presence of unconscious meaning as a separate category that is not fully captured by the current way of distinguishing between natural and non-natural meaning. I argue that Taylor's category of natural meaning is too broad to account for all Marxist and Freudian derived hermeneutical approaches as well, because there is a distinction between unintentional features of a work and those unconscious intentions of which the artist is not aware. Finally, in section 2.6 I give some examples of these unconscious meanings in an effort to show how they differ from standard natural and non-natural meaning. I contend that by acknowledging the importance of both natural meaning and unconscious meaning in works of art, we are better placed to interpret a work because (i) we are brought closer to the artist as interpreters and (ii) we have a more detailed understanding of the connection between the artist and her work.

2.1 Interpretation and Meaning

Popular consensus in the field of aesthetics tends toward the view that artistic interpretation is primarily concerned with intentional meaning. This consensus has come as a result of the long feud between ardent anti-intentionalists such as Barthes (1967), Wimsatt and Beardlsey (1946) and the absolute actual intentionalists such as Hirsch (1976). From this debate two dominant contemporary positions have emerged, which are hypothetical intentionalism (Levinson 1996) and moderate actual intentionalism (Carroll 2000, Stecker 2003, Maes 2010). These positions occupy a more moderate theoretical space but still tend heavily towards intentionalism as the fundamental basis for understanding works of art. Whether some part of the work has been deployed as an allegory or metaphor, whether a theme was chosen to create a particular effect and whether the work itself belongs to a category or genre of works are all treated as kinds of intentional meaning. However, whilst it is relatively easy to identify these examples, we are left wanting for a comprehensive and explicit definition of intentional meaning, as well as a clear exposition of its relationship to interpretative practice. To clarify these distinctions, we need a more substantial account of intentional meaning.

Grice (1989) refers to intentional meaning as a form of non-natural meaning. In his work he tries to understand the various ways in which we use the word 'meaning'. He does not explicitly define the two senses of the word 'meaning,' instead he uses a series of examples to outline the differences between them. An example of non-natural meaning might be any communication between two people where an action intends to convey a particular meaning. If a person wants to convey disapproval to their friend they might shake their head, but crucially this would be a deliberate movement intended to convey a particular message. The meaning of this action is widely recognisable and an audience would understand it clearly. Grice is therefore adopting a communicative model of non-natural meaning, where the utterer intends to elicit a particular response from the audience and it is as a direct consequence of the utterer's words or actions that said response would be elicited. In contrast, natural meaning is the unintentional features of an event that are relevant to an interpretative investigation. For Grice the fundamental difference between natural and non-natural meaning is essentially the difference between saying, "those spots mean measles" and "'Schnee' means 'snow'" (Grice 1989, p.213). The spots are indicative of some underlying condition which causes them, where Schnee is intentionally used by an utterer to denote snow.

We can, however, also make inferences from certain actions that are not necessarily intended to be conveyed by the agent performing the action. For instance, if a student is overly confident in conversation with her teacher, if she talks in a particularly pretentious way or her posture is

slovenly, we might say this means she is arrogant. All her movements may be intentional, but crucially she does not intend to convey arrogance. Nevertheless, labelling her behaviour as arrogant is still a legitimate description and in the same way that spots means measles, those behaviours could mean arrogance. Applying this to a discussion in aesthetics, these might include recurring themes or particular imagery that reappear throughout a given work or series of works. Such themes might have been deployed for the sake of the storyline, but sometimes they also give us an insight into other contextual factors such as the personality of the artist or the cultural context in which the piece was written. Taylor offers a more general example of non-natural meaning, which illustrates the difference clearly.

> If I am arguing with you and get so angry that I involuntarily snap the pencil in my hand, this might prompt you to think *that means he is angry*. Because you know what anger is, hence know that intemperate or aggressive behaviour is one of its characteristic effects, you are able to interpret my action (naturally) means I am angry. (Taylor 2014, p.381)

Fundamentally the difference between natural and non-natural meaning is the way in which the audience receives the information they are to interpret. The former is an inference based on evidence of my anger, whereas the latter, by contrast, is a more direct way of conveying my disapproval. The shaking of the head is not an inference as such, rather it is a way of communicating something that an agent intends to be interpreted a particular way. Natural meaning has been somewhat neglected in the field of interpretation, with philosophers such as Carroll arguing that interpretation is primarily concerned with the non-natural or intentional meaning.

> Yet with regard to the interpretation of actions, interpretation scrutinizes […] the action or actions that the artist undertook in the creation of the work. That is, interpretation pursues the question of what the creator intended or meant by the work or a part thereof – for example, what is the theme or thesis? (Carroll 2009, p.115)

Carroll is pointing out what he perceives to be the parts of action in artmaking that are specifically relevant to interpretation. He clearly states that interpretation is concerned with the intentions of the artist and makes little mention here of the inferences we can make through natural meaning, a point I will revisit in section two. He argues that one part of interpreting the characters in a story might be to better understand their actions and behaviours, where another part might be to analyse what the author intended or meant by the work. What an agent intends or means to communicate is one of the salient points in interpretation. Carroll does

acknowledge that the category of things open to artistic interpretation is quite broad and explains that the properties of artworks that makes them appropriate subjects for interpretation is the very fact that they are confusing or not completely obvious. If something is wholly obvious no interpretation is needed. To that end objects of interpretation go "beyond what is directly given or foregrounded" (Carroll 2009, p.117).

In contrast, Lamarque argues that thinkers such as Carroll are too narrowly focused on non-natural meaning and he points out that it is not just intentional action that can be open to interpretation. Natural phenomena can also be the object of interpretation, but he says that the meaning being investigated in each case is different. For Lamarque the difference is that only natural phenomena can be interpreted as containing natural meaning.

> For artefacts a different mode of interpretation, and accordingly a different kind of meaning is sought. […] Having established that a phenomenon is natural rather than intentional we seek to make sense of it through naturalistic explanation, that would not be appropriate if we viewed the phenomenon to be of human (or intentionalistic) origin. (Lamarque 2000, pp.96-97)

I agree with Lamarque that natural phenomena have this kind of naturalistic explanation, I also agree that natural phenomena can be subject to interpretations, but I believe that works with intentional origins also contain elements that can be explained in natural terms. Furthermore, I agree that distinctions should be made in each case between the kinds of interpretation on offer. Works of art should be interpreted by looking for purpose or intention, but there might be unintentional aspects that are relevant to a complete interpretation. Similarly, Taylor argues that just because an object or artwork has been identified as the result of intentional action does not mean that it cannot be interpreted naturalistically (Taylor 2014). Ruling out naturalistic interpretation excludes the prospect of natural meaning being found in addition to, or alongside, the intentional meaning in the work. In the case of the snapped pencil, anyone who witnessed such an event would surely conclude that the person who snapped the pencil was angry.

> [I]f you were observing [him] you might conclude *that means he is angry*. In this case, the significance of the action – that it shows my anger – is not intentional but a feature of the action's natural meaning. (Taylor 2014, p.382)

The pencil was not snapped intentionally, although we could easily conceive of a different example where this was the case. In this case however our anger is revealed unintentionally, occurring as a result of a sudden impulse and without premeditation or purpose. The snapping

of the pencil is a consequence or side effect of the agent's frustration, not an act intended to convey it. However, as we have already discussed, natural meaning can also be deduced from intentional actions. For instance, the host who sits at the dinner table attempting to impress his guests by affecting, in his stories, greater importance or merit than they actually deserve, could be accused of being pretentious. It was not his intention that his guests should find him unbearably pretentious, annoying or arrogant but every act he performed and every word he chose was nonetheless intentional.

Intentional actions and their consequences could also have natural meaning that may only be discoverable once we have already interpreted their non-natural meaning. For instance, if someone makes a comment about my friend and I interpret the comment as facetious or insincere, then I might additionally interpret this comment as exposing a disdain for my friend. The interpretation of the comment as deliberately facetious is a form of non-natural meaning because it is intended to be to be received by the listener in a certain way, but it unwittingly reveals the utterer's feelings about my friend. This is a kind of natural meaning that can only be found after we have first established the intentional potion of the action because if we fail to correctly identify the speaker's intentions then we cannot always make the correct inferences as to the natural meaning. There are obviously cases where someone might use facetiousness or insincerity to intentionally convey disdain, but here I am exploring a case where the agent did not mean for such a conclusion to be drawn from their actions. These cases are different to the cases of natural meaning which do not require prior intentional meanings to properly contextualise them.

Lamarque's distinction does not acknowledge the possibility of natural meaning being found in intentionally constructed works, but at least it acknowledges natural meaning as a legitimate target for interpretation. As I have already stated, contemporary discussions in aesthetics surrounding interpretation have predominantly focused on the debate between hypothetical and moderate actual intentionalism. These discussions have not, in general, concerned themselves with, or acknowledged the presence of natural meaning. Taylor's work is fairly unusual in this sense, hence the most recent reference to natural meaning in his paper is to the original Gricean commentary. It seems as though the reaction to structuralism and post-structuralism has been so severe that now all other proposed forms or conceptions meaning are seen as irrelevant and, for many philosophers, the intended meaning is assumed to signify the legitimate limits of artistic interpretation[5]. Natural meaning is a crucial part of meaning in the interpretation of

[5] One exception in the contemporary literature is Andrew Huddleston (2016), whose non-intentionalism makes a concerted effort to challenge this orthodoxy.

artworks and even though it should be acknowledged as a separate kind meaning to non-natural meaning, its neglect and even stigmatisation in some cases, has left a gap in the contemporary literature. Until these omissions are addressed we cannot consider the matter settled.

2.2 Abandonment of Natural Meaning

Many schools of thought have tried to impress upon us the importance of alternative forms of meaning in interpretive practice. Taylor believes that "Marxist, Post structural, psychoanalytic and feminist" art critics seek to show how structure, styles and themes bring out natural meaning in works (Taylor 2014, p.390). However, these theories tend to sit out on the fringe of aesthetics as a philosophical discipline. These kinds of deep interpretation are often accused of lacking the analytical rigour required to make a significant impact in the current debate. Understanding exactly how and why these interpretations came to be so vehemently rejected is important if we are to rehabilitate them. This requires an exposition of its own which I will undertake in this section.

Although Grice introduced the term "natural meaning", related ideas about non-intentional meaning were already present in the continental tradition and had become associated with Critical Theory and Marxist derived hermeneutical approaches. These interpretive approaches are often referred to as "theory". Theory or Critical Theory refers to a group of theories derived from the Frankfurt School in the 1930's. In the field of literary criticism, these theories were considered to be part of a series of structural interpretations that focused on criteria other than the intentions of the artist. For instance, structuralism rejects the notion that a work of art reflects a given reality. Instead structuralism argues that all elements of human culture should be understood through an overarching structure. In this way it tries to unearth the structures that underpin all human thought and behaviour, while postmodern critical theory focuses on the breakdown of cultural identities so that it can question the metanarratives or claims to objective truths. It tends to look at cultural issues "by situating them in historical and cultural contexts, to implicate themselves in the process of collecting and analysing data, and to relativize their findings" (Lindlof & Taylor 2002, p.49). However, in analytic philosophy these methods have been met with scepticism. They do not focus enough on the content of the work and were deemed in many cases to be logically invalid and unsound. For instance, in reference to prominent works in the continental tradition, Chomsky (2012a) criticised this kind of scholarship stating that it was often based on pathetic misinterpretations and what little argument was present failed to come close to the standards required for serious academic philosophy. He has also accused prominent continental philosopher and psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan of being a charlatan. In a radio interview he said,

> I'm not interested in *theory* […] There's no theory in any of this stuff, not in the sense of theory in the sciences or any other serious field. Try to find […] some principles from which you can deduce conclusions that yield empirically testable propositions where it all goes beyond the level of something you can explain in five minutes to a twelve-year-old […] when all the fancy words are decoded I can't. (Chomsky 2012b)

John Searle (1977) has accused continental philosophers such as Derrida of engaging in pseudo-philosophy, arguing that his work is deliberately opaque and completely devoid of argument or meaningful content. Richard Rorty (1989) has also criticised continental philosophers for being deliberately vague in order to escape the naivety of other projects in the field. This criticism extends beyond the field of philosophy into other academic domains such as sociology as well. Mills (2000) refers to a kind of Grand Theory, which he argues is guilty of similar mistakes.

> The grand theorists are […] so rigidly confined to such high levels of abstraction that the 'typologies' they make up– and the work they do to make them up – seem more often an arid game of Concepts than an effort to define systematically – which is to say, in a clear and orderly way – the problems at hand, and to guide our efforts to solve them. (Mills 2000, p.34)

One particular worry with continental philosophy in aesthetics is that focusing too heavily on the contextual relations between the work and the artist – her cognitive states at the time of composition or the cultural paradigm in which the work was constructed – would render the work itself redundant or interchangeable because the contextual relations become the target of interpretation, rather than the actual content of the work. However, buried within these contextual relations and cognitive states, some of the really interesting claims are actually claims of natural meaning[6]. For instance, in Marxist literary criticism, works are considered to be a reflection of the economic base, which is an analysis that lands us squarely in the domain of natural meaning. If by reading a text or looking at a work of art we can make inferences about the economic structure in which it was conceived, that is the same kind of inferred meaning that we are searching for in the snapping pencil and the grey skies. Terry Eagleton, argues that Marxist literary theory aims "to explain the literary work more fully; and this means a more sensitive attention to its forms, styles and meanings as the products of a particular history" (Eagleton 2002, p.3). In spite of this however, 'deep interpretations' are generally met with hostility in much of the analytic tradition. Deep interpretations are often considered to

[6] Other interesting claims fall firmly in the purview of unconscious meaning, as I will argue later.

just describe symptomatic readings of works, but the term is often deployed more broadly to cover the kinds of Marxist readings we have just discussed above. For instance, in his discussion of deep interpretations Danto writes,

> Deep Interpretation supposes surface interpretation to have done its work, so that we know what has been done and why. Now we look for the deep determinates of da-vincian action. Appeal to his intentions only individuates the interpretandum for a deep interpretation, but the interpretantia refer us to Leonardo's kinky unconscious, his economic locus, and to the semiotics of embellishment in Florentine culture – what the Medici went in for instead of cockfights – and on and on and on. There is no end to deep interpretation, perhaps because there is no end to science, not even humanscience, and who knows what deep structures the future will reveal? The artist's intentions have nothing to do with these. Surface interpretation must be scrupulously historical, and refer only to possibilities Leonardo could have acknowledged without attributing to him knowledge of the human sciences of the future […] Deep interpretation, finally, admits a certain overdetermination – the work can mean many different things under deep interpretation without being rendered the least indeterminate under surface interpretation. Like philosophy, in a way, deep interpretation leaves the world as it finds it. Nor does knowledge of it enter into response, except to the degree that response itself is given deep interpretation. (Danto 1981, p.706)

It was Danto who coined the term 'deep interpretations' in his paper by the same name. In this passage, writing on the subject of Leonardo he conveys his scepticism toward these theories and explains why they add nothing as such to aesthetic scholarship. Later Carroll echoed his sentiments in his book *On Criticism* (2009), where he writes,

> In recent years […] certain practices have arisen which, though they might offer themselves as successor disciplines to criticism, are really something very different. [T]he sorts of hermeneutical approaches that Arthur Danto has dubbed "Deep Interpretations". Examples might include Freudian-derived hermeneutics such as Lacanianism, Marxist-derived hermeneutics as popularized by Louis Althusser, or post-structuralist practices like deconstruction. […] [T]hey target sub-intentional processes–such as the operation of the unconscious, or of the material forces of production, or the operation of language–as a key to understanding artworks. (Carroll 2009, p.42-43)

In his defence, Carroll (1993) attempts to acknowledge the relevance of other factors relevant to interpretation beyond intention, by pointing out that a main feature of our response to an artwork is the emotions, attitudes and dispositions which influenced the artist at the time of composition and reveal themselves in the work. He says that "artworks are naturally explained and understood in the way in which it is natural to explain and understand any other kind of intentional activity or the products thereof" (Carroll 1993, p.247-248). The fact that these processes focus on non-intentional meanings does not immediately make them synonymous with natural meaning, but as I have shown in my example from Marxist literary criticism, there is often natural meaning buried within a larger category of non-intentional meanings. Commenting on Wollheim's view of interpretation Carroll writes,

> [I]nstead of thinking simply of the artist's intentions, narrowly construed, we should consider content or meaning to be determined by relevant elements of the mental stock of the artist. (Carroll 2000, p.121)

However, Carroll has stopped short of a wholesale commitment to another kind of interpretive practice like natural or unconscious interpretation on the grounds that it is not really reconcilable, in his view, with moderate actual intentionalism. In the coming chapters I will explain how these views are in fact compatible.

Instead of building a distinction between natural and non-natural meaning as Taylor (2014) has done in his work, Carroll formulates a theory that will try to account for both. The problem with this is that he cannot account for instances where an interpretation of some work is wholly appropriate but not intended by the artist. As we have just seen, Carroll (1993) attempts to address the omission of unintentional meaning in contemporary aesthetic theory by saying that an important part of our interaction with works of art is less concerned with intentional action and more concerned with the expression of feelings, characteristics and attitudes that show themselves through the production of an artist's work.

Despite acknowledging the presence of some natural meaning in creative works, Carroll has continued to be resistant to the Marxist and Freudian derived hermeneutics outlined above which Taylor considers to be a part of natural meaning.

Bruno Latour (2004) has offered an extensive breakdown of the possible reasons that Critical Theory and Marxist-Freudian derived hermeneutics of this sort have failed to make a significant impact in contemporary aesthetic theory. In his critique titled, *Why has critique run out of steam?* Bruno Latour addresses the assault that critical theory underwent in the recent past. He

argues that the methods being used are problematic and asks whether philosophy is duty bound to add "deconstruction to destruction?" (Latour 2004 p.225). This phrase likely alludes to the deconstructionism of Derrida. He maintains that Critical Theory has had its sights on the wrong targets and says that the revolutionary language is preparing readers for ideological wars that are no longer relevant or necessary.

> [E]ntire Ph.D. programs are still running to make sure that good American kids are learning the hard way that facts are made up, that there is no such thing as natural, unmediated, unbiased access to truth, that we are always prisoners of language, that we always speak from a particular standpoint, and so on, while dangerous extremists are using the very same arguments of social construction to destroy hard-won evidence that could save our lives. (Latour 2004, p.227)

Latour claims those who insist that facts are the result of social construction are trying to show there is no "sure ground" (Latour 2004, p.227) for anything, even criticism. Ultimately the Latourean critique can be understood as follows. The '*post* critic' acts as though she is privy to some special knowledge, which she lauds over those less enlightened than her. Here Latour is using the word 'post' as a pejorative term to loosely describe a whole genre of philosophies he sees as broadly speaking the same in both style and content such as post-structuralism, post-modernism and post-Marxism. The post critic offers up this knowledge as a means of liberating the less enlightened by debunking their excessive or irrational devotion to a particular object. They do this by making them realise that they are projecting their unconscious desires onto something that is of no value in isolation. For Latour the mistake of the critic is that they fail to apply these same standards to their own beliefs. They fail to debunk their own excessive and irrational devotions towards debunking as a practice, rendering them the most foolish of all. He says "the anti-fetishist critics are also fetishists. Fetishists of their own cherished method or discipline" (Latour 2004 p.240). He gives the example of his fellow countryman and Jean Baudrillard, whose cultural criticism seems to embody many of Latour's concerns.

> What has critique become when a French general, no, a marshal of critique, namely Jean Baudrillard, claims in a published book that the Twin Towers destroyed themselves under their own weight, so to speak, undermined by the utter nihilism inherent in capitalism itself–as if the terrorist planes were pulled to suicide by the powerful attraction of this black hole of nothingness. (Latour 2004, p.228)

Latour's critique points to several issues, the first of which is the inconsistencies in the argumentation, not least because Baudrillard also said that no plane ever crashed into the

Pentagon (Baudrillard 2002), but also because Latour claims there is a paradox at the heart of this critical method more generally. Namely, that one moment the critic is trying to awaken us to the ugly truth (which naïve believers will not accept) so that we can be free, but then their "second salvo" (Latour 2004, p.238) is to point out that we cannot be free because we are acted on by forces we are not aware of.

Second, Latour is concerned that the leading thinkers have abandoned the cause and the ideas in play have become self-destructive in nature because they have an "excessive confidence in ideological arguments posturing as matters of fact" (Latour 2004, p.227). For Taylor (2014) these theories that try to identify ideological assumptions, repressed desires, implicitly misogynistic attitudes and prejudice are all forms of natural meaning. However, in section five, I will argue that natural meaning does not adequately capture many of these unconscious attitudes because ultimately, they constitute unconscious intentions. Some of these post-theories might still be prevalent and problematic, but I want to suggest that we can still have serious discussions about Freudian derived and psychoanalytic theories. However, they occupy a different space between natural and non-natural meaning. Intentional meanings are a form of non-natural meaning, so unconscious intentional meanings must in some sense subsume under non-natural meaning. However, the way in which we interpret these unconscious meanings requires a methodological approach more similar to the symptomatic interpretations involved in natural meaning. Therefore, unconscious meaning should be understood as a category of its own which overlaps with the other two. In the next section I will explore some specific examples of this methodology in order to show how we can recover these natural meanings from creative works.

2.3 Natural vs. Non-natural Meaning in Aesthetics

Whilst works of art are the products of intentional action and contain non-natural meaning in abundance, interpretation of said works requires our attention to both the intended meaning and general meanings which might present themselves in a broader sense. The broader sense is comprised on the one hand of meaning derived from the work despite the artist's intentions – this is what we have established as natural meaning – and on the other of the meaning derived from any unconscious intentional action.

A work may contain certain symptomatic characteristics or features such as anger, joviality, regret, and vivaciousness amongst others. These suggestive characteristics are found in the work and are distinguishable from other kinds of expressive characteristics belonging to the non-natural meaning of the work. A poet might use a particular rhythm or rhyme scheme to

convey an idea or evoke a particular emotion in the reader as part of the intended meaning. However, the kind of suggestive characteristics I have in mind are different to these, because they unintentionally show through in the writing or medium presented. The work gives us the sense that it was written under a particular influence or that the artist was overcome with a particular feeling during the composition of the work. Conveying that feeling to an audience is not the intended consequence but rather a serendipitous feature of the work. The action of an agent and the works she creates inevitably reveals things about her as a person, whether she intends them to or not. The suggestive characteristics I have in mind are those where an agent does not intend them to convey or reveal these things. An artist might paint a particular form, arrange a particular passage of words or even choose a theme as the subject of her work that divulge particular details of her life and background. An audience might legitimately find regret, longing, tension or frustration in a work without the artist intending to convey them.

In cases such as these where the work presented reveals an influence or feeling that can appropriately be ascribed to the artist, the suggestive characteristic is an example of natural meaning. One example of natural meaning in literature can be found in the poem the "Kubla Khan" written by Samuel Taylor Coleridge. The poem itself is about Kubla Khan who was a Mongolian emperor and a relation of Ghengis Khan. The poem was written one night after he awoke from a dream he had whilst under the influence of opium. From visions of a scary figure with flashing eyes elevated to god-like status, to the setting inside a "pleasure dome" in the Emperor's palace, the poem is riddled with themes that could easily be associated with drug use. Not to mention the fragmented and chaotic structure and the fact that it remains unfinished because Coleridge, by his own admission was interrupted and forgot the last lines. Additionally, Sheppard (1847) reflected on Coleridge's drug use worrying that it got in the way of his creative abilities. In his analysis titled *On Dreams* he writes, "it is probable, since he writes of having taken 'anodyne', that the 'vision in a dream' arose under some excitement of that same narcotic; but this does not destroy, even as to his particular case, the evidence for a wonderfully inventive action of the mind in sleep; for whatever were the exciting cause, the fact remains the same" (Sheppard 1847, p.170). This information is relevant to the natural meaning of the poem because we can rephrase this analysis to the effect that the fragmented and chaotic structure *means* drug use. It also does not directly relate to the intention of the author, which would have been to write a poem describing his dream. Taylor argues that instances of non-natural meaning are intentionally expressed while instances of natural meaning such as these are "directly expressed" (Taylor 2014, p.384). Furthermore he sees intentional meaning as requiring an interactive interpretation whereas the interpretation of natural meaning is an external one. For Taylor interpreting non-natural meaning is to uncover the meaning intended by the artist and he sees this as an interactive line between artist and

audience. Natural meaning on the other hand deals with a "form of psychological explanation" (Taylor 2014, p.384) and the job of the interpreter is to identify expressive qualities in the work indicative of various mental states. In the case of the Kubla Khan, Coleridge's way of writing would be a direct expression of his personality and the effect that drugs had on him. His way of writing will manifest clearly aspects of his character. As Jenefer Robinson points out:

> If a person's actions are an expression of her personality, then those actions have the character that they have […] in virtue of the fact that they are caused by the corresponding trait of mind or character in that person. (Robinson 1985, p.229)

If Coleridge's actions are an expression of his personality or indeed those factors influencing him at the time of writing, then his way of writing is evidence of his drug use. His writing exhibits certain features and may be disclosed without Coleridge being aware that these effects are demonstrative of his drug use. Here the way of interpreting natural meaning is very different to the way we interpret non-natural meaning. Interpreting non-natural meaning in a work is an effort to recover the intentions of the artist. We analyse the content of the work and the context in which it was produced in order to understand what the artist was trying to convey. In contrast, natural meaning in a work requires a different kind of explanation with a slightly broader scope of inquiry. The aim of the interpreter in this case is to highlight expressive characteristics in the work and establish what might have influenced them. This could be a cultural influence like the socio-economic paradigm or indeed a chemical influence as in the case of Coleridge. Interpretation of natural meaning involves finding trends that originate in cognitive states and arguing that the influence of these states on the artist explains the trends in her work.

Taylor outlines three differences between these interactive and external interpretations. 1) With interactive interpretation the audience must aim to understand the artist's intention by attending to the content and cues. With external interpretation the interpreter takes a more isolated role, in an effort to find the best psychological explanation for the work and its construction – 'isolated' in the sense that the interpreter must disconnect with the work in order to possibly explore more external sources of knowledge. 2) The artist has "privileged knowledge of non-natural meaning" (Taylor 2014, p.384) because it has to do with her intentions. Not so with natural meaning. So, the artist has control over the former but not so much the latter. 3) Non-natural meaning can entail anything an artist wants to communicate, whereas natural meaning covers all states of mind that influence the work and its content.

I have some concerns with the second of these differences, because Taylor seems to be perpetuating the myth that intentions are private mental phenomena. In the previous chapter we explored the various implications of this common misstep, however we could perhaps reword the second difference, focusing on the control element rather than the privileged knowledge of private intentions, without necessarily undermining the structure of the argument. For instance, most people accept that we have control over our intentional actions, but where natural meaning is concerned we are not so clearly in command of what is revealed in our work. This difference can be highlighted without appealing to a model of intentions that relies on them being defined as private mental phenomena.

2.4 The Implied Author and Natural Meaning

Acknowledging the presence of natural meaning is important for various reasons, one of which is the impact it has on the debate between hypothetical and moderate actual intentionalism. Whilst I do not want to delve into a complete exposition of this debate here, it is important to discuss the possible implications for some hypothetical intentionalists and those who invoke an implied figure (Nelles 2011, Booth 1961) to better understand an artist's work[7]. In this section I will argue that once we acknowledge natural meaning as a legitimate category many of the reasons for invoking the implied figure become redundant.

When we interpret works of art it is important to ask whether we can legitimately assign the cognitive states we have just discussed to the actual artist or whether we need to construct a hypothetical figure who stands somewhere between the work and the artist instead. This hypothetical figure would then take on these cognitive states as a way of theorising about the work through an intermediary. When we see, read or hear a work of art we are sometimes conscious of an implied artist lurking behind the scenes. As the work plays out or we pay closer attention to it we get a feel for the artist's feelings, perspectives and personality. However, because the artist has control over the production of her work (in a superficial sense), she will carefully craft her own image for the sake of public perception. There might be various reasons for this, ranging from a public relations stunt to simply caring what people think of her. We must be careful then when we assume that the feelings or attitudes that present themselves to us in the work are indeed those of the artist. On balance it would seem prudent to assign these traits to the hypothetical figure, which stands between the artist and the work. However, the introduction of natural and unconscious meanings means that there are elements of the work,

[7] Many hypothetical intentionalists such as Levinson do invoke an implied author and I will explore this debate in more detail in the next chapter.

which come through without the artist necessarily intending them to. These can be clues to the actual artist's motivations.

We have already identified the propensity in aesthetics for referring to the meaning of a work as determined solely by its non-natural meaning. On this model the author has almost complete control over the meaning of a work and becomes a god-like figure when it comes to interpretation – the ultimate arbiter of meaning in a given work. If we take this to be true then there is no reason to believe that the content of the work reflects her feelings or attitudes at all, but rather the characteristics that she wanted to be attributed to her as an artist. When we acknowledge natural meaning in works of art we are less inclined to acquiesce in this way, mainly because we no longer view the limits of the work as defined by intentional action, excluding the possibility that there are unintentional but entirely relevant features for the subject of interpretation. Natural and unconscious meanings often negate the need for this hypothetical figure to be introduced because we can access and investigate the subtleties of the work and subsequently zero in on the artist's actual intentions, motivations and states of mind. In some cases, the work itself will be enough to reveal these forms of meaning and in other cases we might need further external, contextual evidence to consolidate or reinforce our interpretation.

Natural meaning can be suggested, though not directly expressed, in the artist's intentional choices and it can be difficult to distinguish natural meaning in these cases from non-natural meaning. Natural meaning is comprised of feelings and characteristics transmitted in a way that is understood without being stated as a result of the various influences on the artist at the time of composition. The artist is largely unaware of this kind of meaning. When we interpret natural meaning, we are still interested in the artist's voluntary and unconstrained cognitive states, and we are attempting to understand the effect these have on the content of the work. As a consequence, one could argue we are still focused on the actual artist rather than the hypothetical figure. However, this comes with problems. Knowing with certainty that a particular feeling or attitude influenced an artist and knowing with absolute certainty it is that feeling or attitude which influenced a particular aspect of the work's content, is quite a rare phenomenon. Carroll (2009) has pointed out that we cannot always trust the artist's statements of intent on the occasions they are available to us. Additionally, many artists take on or play around with fictional personas. They draw, paint, write, compose or sculpt as if they were being influenced by certain factors so that they might more faithfully portray the work. Knowing whether or not a feeling or characteristic has been expressed for the sake of artistic affect can be challenging then. It is difficult to distinguish natural meaning in these cases from non-natural meaning. One example of this can be found in an interview with comedian, writer and director Stewart Lee, where he explains to interviewer Alan Moore that he found it difficult

to write for *The Guardian* until he realised that he could write as a character. The interview was titled, *'I'll write as if I'm trying to get sacked'* (Lee 2016), in which he explains how he had "a bit of a breakthrough" with how to write the articles.

> I thought, 'I'll try and write as if I'm trying to get sacked'. As if this is the last column I've been asked to do. I also realised, a bit like I had done with the stand-up, there had to be some sort of separation between the column's voice and […] who you were. (Lee 2016)

Lee explains that he plays with the parameters of writing a newspaper column through his comedy characters and this is a clear example of Lee wanting to convey a particular image of himself to the audience, from which it might be harder to glean natural meaning. In order to try and resolve this issue we must look more closely at the specific instances and kinds of natural meaning to be unearthed in works of art. Taylor notes that some expressions are neutral as it were, not carrying with them good or bad connotations.

> [E]xpressions of gravity, anger, and so on – are generally not; we do not imply that there is something good or bad about writing when we call it grave or angry, because the writing may or may not benefit from these qualities, depending on the appropriateness of gravity or anger in the context. In this sense, these terms are purely descriptive. (Taylor 2014, p.385)

However, there are other terms and expressions, particularly in literary theory, which could be construed as nostalgic, chauvinist, disingenuous, amusing etc. When we assign these properties to works of art we are making a judgement about the work. For instance, in describing something as chauvinist we would usually be articulating a shortcoming of the work. The appearance of these expressive characteristics can often indicate the artist's true feelings and cognitive states and in many cases allows us to deduce that a particular content is a legitimate instance of natural meaning.

As we have already discussed, the key aspect in the identification of natural meaning is the disconnection between the artist and interpreter. With non-natural meaning a direct interactive connection is apparent, as the interpreter has to identify the intended meaning from the various inferences and cues available in the work. With natural meaning no such interactive connection appears. The interpreter is not always 'working together' with the artist to get at the intended meaning of the work, but might rather working 'against the grain' to discover things about the artist and the creative process that led to the artist's work. Equally, it is possible that natural

meanings can be discovered that compliment the intended meanings. An illustration of this can be found in the Freedom Club manifesto titled *Industrial Society and its Future* (Kaczynski 1995) authored by Ted Kaczynski. Kaczynski was an American domestic terrorist, known as the Unabomber, who posted mail bombs between 1978 and 1995. Investigation officer agent James R. Fitzgerald and his team pioneered a method called forensic linguistics to analyse his writing in order to write an accurate profile of Kaczynski from his work. Fitzgerald concluded that certain phraseology, formatting and the idiolect used were particularly revealing of Kaczynski's character. For instance, the numbered paragraphs and the format of the endnotes suggested standard formatting for an older graduate thesis paper, so they were able to deduce that he probably had a high level of education and that he was over 50 years of age. Moreover before 1967 the corrections page of a thesis paper would have been entitled 'errata'; from this they could deduce when he learned the formatting and most likely when he wrote his PhD. The FBI went further and analysed specific patterns and idiosyncrasies found in his writing. They found that he used curious variations of traditional American spelling such as "wilfully", "analyse" and "instalment" which suggested he learned from a particular style guide found in the Chicago Tribune. They also noticed particular phraseology, which was correct but archaic such as 'eat your cake and have it too.' In addition, he used out-dated racist language, which pointed toward an older man who had a distinct lack of interaction with others (Chase 2000).

There are instances like this elsewhere in literature. For instance, Ernest Hemingway was famous for writing in concise prose with short sentences in his fiction. An example of this can be found in his novel *A Farewell to Arms* (Hemingway 1929).

> She's just having a bad time. The initial labour is usually protracted. She's only having a bad time. Afterward we'd say what a bad time and Catherine would say it wasn't really so bad. But what if she should die? She can't die. Yes, but what if she should die? She can't I tell you. Don't be a fool. It's just a bad time. (Hemingway 1929, p.246)

Hemingway's economical use of language and expression allows us to focus on the salient information and the true emotion generated in the work. His work is understated and this often helps the real gravity of the situation. Prior to Hemingway this style of writing had been confined to journalism and so one might suspect that this is where he learned his trade as a writer. Indeed, after leaving school he worked as a reporter for the Kansas City Star (Meyers 1985). Whilst it is true to an extent that Hemingway could have deliberately employed this style, when you have trained to write as a journalist this style would naturally appear in all facets of the work without the author necessarily realising it. Furthermore, one could argue

that style and format, whilst interesting, are not related to meaning, but I would argue that this style is functional and serves an interpretive purpose. The style of his writing is directly related to the natural meaning found in his work. Just as we say that the snapping of the pencil means the person holding the pencil is angry, we can say that the objective, terse and abrupt style means the author was influenced by his career as a journalist. It can often be difficult to determine whether these stylistic traits were intentional or not, for instance, it could have been the case that in this case Hemmingway intended to evoke journalistic prose. In the next section I will offer some examples where external evidence is available to reinforce my conclusion that meanings we uncover are not intended by the artist.

2.5 Unconscious Meaning

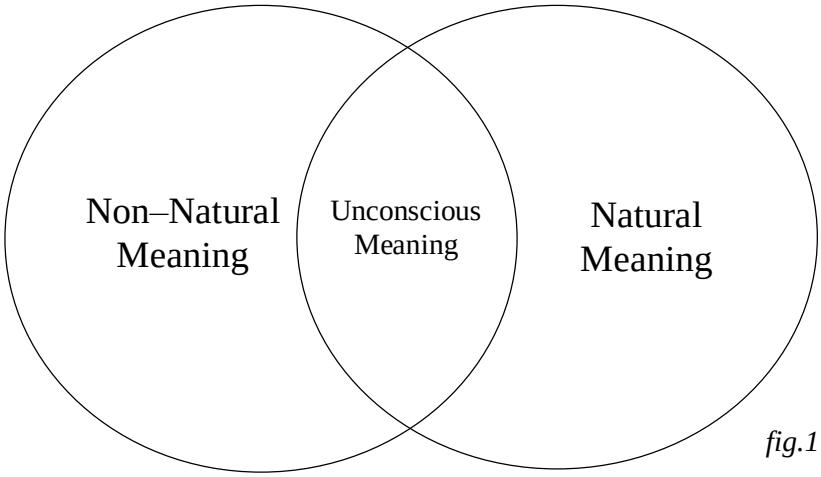

fig.1

In this chapter so far, I have outlined the two kinds of meaning available for interpretation in literature. However, I have concerns about the broad scope of natural meaning because it seems to cover interpretations that are more significant than just the inferences made from the idiolect of the author or the snapping of the pencil. As we saw earlier, Taylor also wants natural meaning to cover "Marxist and Freudian derived" interpretive approaches (Taylor 2014, p.340). However, natural meaning does not adequately encapsulate what Taylor has in mind here. For instance, much of Freudian derived hermeneutics treats elements of artworks as parapraxes. A parapraxis is an error in speech, memory or physical action, which occurs because an unconscious attitude, wish or desire interferes with your intentional action (Freud 1938, 1935). Freud's psychoanalytic theory defines the unconscious mind as a plethora of thoughts, feelings, urges and memories which reside outside of the conscious mind (Freud 1938). Freud argued that the unconscious mind influences our behaviour and we are largely unaware of these influences. The analogy of an iceberg is often put forward to explain this state of affairs, with the bulk of the iceberg which resides beneath the water and represents the unconscious mind hiding out of view, and the small portion of the iceberg above the water representing the

conscious mind. Freud believed that we keep many of our darkest desires and emotions supressed beneath the surface because they are too threatening, but occasionally they find their way through in the form of parapraxes, which we will look at later in this chapter. Freud uses concepts such as the id, the ego and the super-ego to describe the distinct, interacting apparatus in this cognitive process. He suggests that the id represents the most primitive desires present in our unconscious, the super-ego is a form of conscience and the ego is a pragmatic part of the mind which mediates between these two.

Freudian theory has not been without its critics. For instance, one major criticism of Freud's work was that it lacked a proper scientific method (Bargh 2019). Many of his conclusions were based on studies of one case, where modern scientific research would require greater sample sizes in order to draw legitimate conclusions. Despite this fact, psychoanalysis has never left the field of art criticism.

In Chapter One we established that an intentional action is one that has a conscious, reason-based explanation, therefore, in my view, an unconscious intention is one that has an unconscious reason-based explanation. The intention is unconscious because the reason for action stems from an unconscious belief, therefore it cannot adequately be categorised as a form of natural meaning because natural meanings are not intentional. What we need is a new category, which stands at the intersection between natural and non-natural meaning and deals specifically with unconscious meaning. I would argue that these unconscious interpretations have a slightly different structure and should be treated differently to instances of standard natural and non-natural meaning. Unconscious meaning has various properties in common with both natural and non-natural meaning, as I will seek to explain. Before I can do this, we must revisit work covered in the previous chapter. From the investigation undertaken in the first chapter I have established a comprehensive definition of intention from which I hope to build this argument. Intentions do not *cause* actions and they are not themselves mental phenomena that precede them such as experiences, states of mind, desires, beliefs or memories. These desires and beliefs can form the reason-based explanation for action, but they are not the intentions themselves. Intentions are present in, and can be directed towards actions. Recapitulating on Anscombe's work, we find that to act intentionally is to have a reason-based answer to the 'Why?' question. The 'Why?' question asks, "why did you do that?"and if the answer is reason-based rather than purely causal then the action is understood to be intentional (Anscombe 1967). In these cases, a person is aware of her actions. In the case of unconscious intentions, we can apply the same scrutiny in definition in order to clarify a complicated philosophical concept. Wollheim has famously analysed paintings as parapraxes, or more specifically as actions motivated by unconscious intentions. However, as we have already

discussed, his theory is dependent on the definition of intention as those "desires, thoughts, beliefs, experiences, emotions, commitments, which cause the artist to paint as he does" (Wollheim 1987, p.19). We do not need to commit ourselves to any causal element here, intentional actions are simply those actions which are performed for reasons and the intentions themselves are not identical to beliefs or desires as Wollheim suggests.

According to Wollheim mistakes, misrepresentations, anything out of place that points to an atypical or uncharacteristic move on the part of the artist, often point to the artist's unconscious mental states (Gellar 1993). From this he argues a method of inversion, where the intentions of the painter can be reverse traced through the painting. He agrees with traditional intentionalism that the art and the artist are to be understood in conjunction and he gives some examples of these unconscious intentions in his book, *Painting as an Art*. In a critique of the paintings of Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, he says that distortions in the work *Antiochus and Stratonice* show the artist's unconscious need to break down a childhood perception of his father.

> The composition most endowed with such anomalies is *Antiochus and Startonice* in all its versions […] these spatial distortions cohere with the instrumental, the wishful, character with which, I suggest, Ingres invests painting. (Wollheim 1987, p.274)

Citing inadequacies, specifically poor distancing between the columns, the figures and the shadows, Wollheim argues that "these anomalies require a strong explanation. Carelessness, clumsiness, oversight, will not suffice with such a fastidious, painstaking artist dedicated to self-examination and self-correction as well as self-repetition" (Wollheim 1987, p.275). In another example Wollheim outlines some issues with Manet's paintings. Two paintings, *The Street Singer* and the *Woman with a Parrot* are of particular interest. He notices that the schematic composition of the figures at the front of the painting is set against a heavily patterned background, with a considerable amount of detail, which is hard to make out. The detail is not particularly interesting and the central figure stands in no particular relationship to it.

Comparing this to the fractured background in *The Sickness of Antiochus* by Jean-Augustine-Dominique Ingres, he attributes these as expression of his unconscious desire for reconciliation between his parents. These, for Wollheim, are all examples of unconscious intentions. Wollheim's examples are very helpful but, as I will argue, his failure to properly define unconscious intentions has led him to conflate unconscious intention with unconscious belief.

If we are to understand exactly where unconscious meaning sits between natural and non-natural meaning we must first understand what an unconscious belief is, how it informs intentional action and how it should be interpreted. John Searle claims that the belief that the Eiffel Tower is in Paris is a mental state. He writes,

> [T]he belief that the Eiffel Tower is in Paris is a genuine mental state that most of the time is not present to consciousness. (Searle 1992, p.154)

Therefore, a conscious belief is one where the belief is present to the believer's consciousness. It follows then that most of our beliefs must reside in the unconscious most of the time. We bring a belief into the view of consciousness by thinking about it or presently believing it.

> Not every unconscious feature of my brain that […] functions essentially in my mental life is itself a mental feature. But the belief that the Eiffel Tower is in Paris is a genuine mental state, even though it happens to be a mental state that most of the time is not present to consciousness. […] Just to keep the distinction clear, I propose in this chapter to call […] phenomena like mental states that I am not thinking about or have repressed "unconscious." (Searle 1992, p.154-155)

On this theory we are in any number of unconscious mental states at any one time. However, this is a mistake for two reasons, firstly because believing is not a mental state and secondly because this concept of an unconscious belief is confused. There is a difference between the act of believing and the thing that is believed. If someone firmly believes *x* to be the case, then their belief in *x* is firm. However, the thing that is believed, namely *x*, is not the thing that is firm. In addition, if a person is sceptical about his belief *x*, then it should not be said that his believing what he believes is sceptical (Bennett & Hacker 2003, p.269). We should take care not to conflate the assignment of properties to an agent's believing with the assignment of properties to the subject of her belief.

When philosophers and neuroscientists talk about mental states in this context, it is the believing and not the thing believed that is surely the mental state. If we can have conscious and unconscious beliefs then it is difficult to identify which part of the belief is present to consciousness. It cannot be the believing because then an agent would be conscious of believing whatever it is that they believe. For Searle a belief becomes conscious to us when it comes to mind. In this case Searle has identified a distinction, but not between conscious and unconscious mental states, the distinction he has outlined is in fact between bearing something in mind and thinking about a belief that one holds. For instance, I believe that the author of

Hamlet is Shakespeare, that Jupiter is the largest planet in our solar system and various other things too. I do not think about all of these things at once, but that does not mean that they are unconscious thoughts or knowledge. An unconscious belief then must be something I believe and believing it influences my behaviour and my actions. However, with an unconscious belief, I am defiant with myself and with others that I do not believe it and I will not acknowledge that my belief. Hacker defines unconscious beliefs in these terms arguing that,

> An unconscious belief, correctly construed, is something I believe, believing which colours my emotional reactions and informs my actions, but which I am unwilling to acknowledge, either to myself or to others, as something which I believe. Nevertheless, that I so believe explains my aberrant behaviour (my neuroses) – or so it is conjectured. Only in special circumstances […] do I come to recognise that I unconsciously believed this. (Bennett & Hacker 2003, p.269)

Applying this to Wollheim's account, we must be careful then not to conflate the reason for our intentional actions with the intentions themselves. Unconscious beliefs can manifest themselves and the evidence for this manifestation may be found in the work of an artist. However, this does not mean that unconscious beliefs and unconscious intentions are the same thing. Wollheim is right that unconscious beliefs, thoughts and desires may be the *reasons* for our acting intentionally and we are not aware that these beliefs thoughts and desires are the reason for acting. However, he is wrong to call these desires, thoughts and beliefs the intentions. The unconscious belief might be the reason for action and that reason for action makes sense of the action description as intentional, but the belief itself is not the intention. They are unconscious intentions because they are actions performed for reasons but those reasons are unconscious beliefs, attitudes, wishes, desires and motivations. Examples of these unconscious beliefs and how they manifest themselves in intentional action can be found in psychological studies.

It has now been established in the field of psychology that human beings can be strongly influenced by unconscious bias.[8] This literature indicates that these unconscious biases affect our actions, the way we interact with others, how we judge other people and by extension the

[8] Theories of implicit stereotyping and the effects of unconscious bias on behaviour have been criticized in various studies over the years. Studies claim that the correlation between implicit bias and discriminatory behaviour may be weaker than first thought and results are often difficult to replicate. Oswald, Frederick; Mitchell, Gregory; Blanton, Hart; Jaccard, James; Tetlock, Philip (17 June 2013). *"Predicting Ethnic and Racial Discrimination: A Meta-Analysis of IAT Criterion Studies"*. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology. 105 (2): 171–192. Retrieved 2 September 2018.

choices artists make in their work. Seemingly minor or innocuous individual affects can accumulate and give rise to considerable prejudices against minorities (Valian 1999). Jennifer Saul (2013) has looked at these unconscious influences and divides them into two general categories:

1) Implicit Bias (IB)
2) Stereotype Threat (ST)

IB affects the way we "perceive, evaluate or interact" (Saul 2013, p.40) with people belonging to groups we are biased against.

> [T]he science of implicit cognition suggests that actors do not always have conscious, intentional control over the processes of social perception, impression formation, and judgement that motivate their actions. (Greenwald & Krieger 2006, p.946)

In contrast ST focuses more on an individual's awareness of their own status in a group and how it negatively impacts their abilities. Not only does stereotyping a group lead to an unfavourable external evaluation of an individual's ability, but also ST may lead the individual to underperform (Steele & Aronson 1995).

Studies have shown that even those who generally espouse and profess to hold liberal and egalitarian views also have IB. Their bias is often held against minority groups, such as religions, race, genders and those with a particular sexual orientation. The studies show that these biases manifest themselves in various types of behaviour. One way to understand IB is through the idea of a schema, which is,

> [A] mental construct that, as the name suggests, contains in schematic or abbreviated form, someone's concept about an individual or events or a group. (Valian 1999, p.103)

Regardless of how balanced we think we are the schemas affect us unconsciously. An example of this unconscious bias was documented in a study by Goldin and Rouse (2000), which found that there had been significant increases in female musicians hired for orchestral positions when auditions were conducted behind a screen, keeping the gender of the musician anonymous.

Unconscious associations affect behaviour, including how members of a group interact, evaluate, assign workload and advise others (Haslanger 2008, Valain 1999, 2005). Sometimes

these biases are small but they can add together to create an atmosphere or set a precedent within an institution, group or culture. For instance, the MIT Gender Equity Project explored how women were treated within the faculty in order to understand gender inequalities. They found a range of "micro-inequalities" (Rowe 2008, p1), which together created significant obstacles in the professional development of women. These included, but were not limited to, less space to work in, fewer networking opportunities and less one-to-one time with tutors.

Stereotype Threat (ST) is a different unconscious process. Instead of affecting the way that individuals within a group are unfairly understood, ST affects the way those individuals perform. This underperformance occurs when individuals unconsciously believe the stigmatisation of their group and also worry about confirming these stereotypes (Steele 2010). Blum (2004) acknowledges this is a plausible view, but construes ST quite differently.

> One seemingly plausible hypothesis is that the blacks have actually internalised the stereotype of themselves as intellectually inferior – that is, they have some cognitive attachments (which may or may not rise to the level of an actual belief) in the view of themselves as intellectual inferior – and that the activating of the stereotype brings discouragement or self-doubt to the fore in the test taking situation. The internalisation of the stereotype thus has the unfortunate effect of being self-validating by perversely producing behaviour (doing poorly on the test) that conforms to the stereotype. Indeed, internalising of stereotypes, especially negative ones, is an important way that stereotypes harm their target groups. (Blum 2004, pp.285-286)

Experiments have been undertaken which show how individuals are unconsciously affected this way. In some studies, Black subjects were put in situations that encourage ST, and then they were asked about their favourite music. Under the pressure of these conditions black people opted for music that was stereotyped as or more closely associated with white culture. The results were disproportionately high when compared to white subjects subjected to the opposite set of conditions. In situations that didn't encourage ST black people tended to choose songs stereotyped with "black" culture (Steele 2010, p.53).

The effects of stereotyping can be significant in other ways as well. In some situations, stereotype lift or activation can lead to improved performance as well. For instance, it has been shown to affect how well girls perform in numeracy compared to boys. This stereotype lift increases performance when an agent is made aware of negative stereotypes about other groups or minorities. The improved performance is thought to be due to an agent's increased confidence in their ability to perform certain tasks or behaviours and reduced self-doubt as a

result of negative stereotypes attributed to another social group with which the agent does not identify (Walton & Cohen 2003).

These kinds of action are not accidental, they are not like the actions from which we derive natural meaning, they are intentional actions where the agent is unaware of their motivation. The unconscious belief motivates the intentional action. Returning to the beginning of this chapter then we are reminded that Taylor wants to include any theory of unconscious meaning in the category of natural meaning but I contend that there is a difference between natural meaning and the kind of meaning that arises when we behave a certain way because we hold an unconscious belief. I believe they require slightly different sorts of interpretation.

The difference between the pencil snapping and the unconscious intentional action explained by an unconscious belief such as a case of implicit bias, is the difference between a reason based and a casual based explanation for action. Unconscious beliefs are those that the artist will not necessarily acknowledge as reasons for their choices or intentional actions, but they are not causal in the way that snapping of the pencil means one is angry. They are reason-based actions. The snapping of the pencil is an accident that reveals something about the agent. The intentional action is a result of a deeply repressed or unconscious belief within the artist. However, the artist will not acknowledge that she holds said belief. Nor, by extension, will she acknowledge these beliefs are relevant to the meaning of the piece because she is not aware of her reasons for action.

Unconscious meaning is different to natural meaning because it is recovered through intentional action, in the sense that there is a reason-based explanation for action as opposed to merely a causal explanation. It is also different to standard to non-natural meaning because the artist is not aware of her unconscious beliefs, which are her reasons for action and the action.

2.6 Examples of Unconscious Meaning

In this section I want to focus on three specific examples of unconscious meaning. The first is the work of Salvador Dalí and his work with automatism. The second is an instance of implicit bias from the American television series *The Simpsons*. Finally, the third is the work of Louise Giblin, a British sculptor who, following a discussion with a spectator at one of her exhibitions, became convinced that supressed memories from her childhood had played a significant role in the creation of her work. I argue that all of these show how unconscious beliefs held by and attributed to artists shape our interpretation of the work in different ways. Dalí's work is a more conventional understanding of the unconscious, where *The Simpsons* example and Louise

Giblin's sculpture shows how artworks can manifest unconscious meanings without the artist realising them.

As I have said in the previous section, unconscious interpretations are those where the artist is not necessarily aware of the motivations for their actions, nevertheless the interpretation can be legitimately assigned to their intentional behaviour. The works of Salvador Dalí are often talked about in terms of six very distinct periods, but only three of these are relevant to our discussion in this chapter. The first of these is between 1919 and 1922, which is known as the 'Anna Maria' period, named after his sister who was Dalí's only female model until he met and fell in love with Gala. Anna features in various paintings by Dalí including the later famous work titled *Girl in the Window* (1925). In many ways Dalí considered her to be the ideal female model and a considerable motivation in his work (Weidemann 2007, p.35). Following the death of his mother Dalí entered his second period of work between 1922 and 1928, which is known as his Catalan avant-garde period, because he collaborated on films and exhibitions with Catalan modernists. During this time Dalí went to study Fine Art in Madrid, befriended artists and film directors and spent some time in prison for political activism. As part of his studies in Madrid Dalí took a particular interest in Freud's famous work, *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Themes of the unconscious and repressed sexual desire soon became the focus of Dalí's work. He wrote of Freud's work that it,

> [P]resented itself to me as one of the capital discoveries in my life, and I was seized with a real vice of self-interpretation, not only of my dreams but of everything that happened to me. (Dalí 1976, p.167)

The period between 1929 and 1939 is usually referred to as the Surrealist Period because this is when he joined the Surrealist movement, or the Gala period, as his wife Gala became one of the main inspirations for his work. As a cultural movement Surrealism was focused on portraying irrational, bizarre scenes, often combining peculiar creatures with ordinary objects. The subject matter and style were a way of allowing the unconscious mind of the artist to express itself in the work. To this end, Surrealists also experimented with automatism. Pioneered in the early twentieth century by Dadaists, Automatism refers to the drawing technique where the artist seeks to supress conscious control, which allows the unconscious mind to take control of the creative process. These artists tried to achieve a blank state where they could express the deepest recesses of their thought. Whilst Dalí famously used Freudian concepts in mythology to explore his own unconscious thoughts, it was André Breton who first coined the term Surrealism based on the "unconscious desires" in Freud's writing. (Mundy 2002, p.11)

Around this time Dalí began to use anamorphosis in his work, which is a way of distorting the perspective in an image. For Dalí this usually involved intermingling various objects by the natural movement of their parts, whether those objects were formless or specific "swollen items or body parts" (Addes 2000b, p.20). Dalí's early work that explored this technique was called *The Invisible Man*, which turned Dalí's interest towards states of paranoia in art. Synthesising automatism with his interests in the paranoid Dalí constructed his famous paranoiac-critical method. He claimed that whilst he was creating these works consciously and intentionally he was allowing his unconscious mind and his dreams to guide his hand at work (Addes 1995, p.70). The success of Dalí in communicating these ideas can be largely attributed to the unusual combinations of objects or creatures found together in his works. These unusual combinations elicit strange reactions in the audience, which allows them to confront an internal conflict between the conscious and the unconscious (Cowles 1959, p.277).

Provided we take Dalí's descriptions of his methods as reliable, the meanings of his works from this period are directly linked to his unconscious and repressed thoughts. Perhaps the most famous of these is *Dessin Automatique* (1927) which features indiscriminate black lines across a white canvas, where some of the abstract shapes seem to resemble phallic objects suggesting sexual undertones. The work contains both hard, penetrating angles, alongside soft curves which seem to vaguely resemble the female form. The concentration of the lines in certain areas and the ways in which they intersect sometimes suggest calm control and in other places a frantic chaos. When we attend closely to the details of the work we would have to conclude that there are deep repressed sexual desires being expressed, which speak directly to the meaning of the work. Whilst Dalí's techniques have produced perhaps some of the most famous creative works in history, and many of these works offer us examples of unconscious meanings found in works of art, I also have something more contemporary in mind.

One aspect of my next example, which stands in contrast with Dalí's work, is the focus on the content left out as well as the content present in the work. Items an artist leaves out of artworks are often as revealing as the things they include. For instance, around 600 AD Slavic people started to appear all over Europe, however the whereabouts of the Slavic homeland was a historical mystery. Then experts began to take a closer look at their language and it turned out that proto-Slavic was missing words for certain types of tree. The Slavic people had borrowed words for various common types of tree found all over Europe. Experts were able to deduce that these trees were missing from their idiolect because they were not in their homeland. From these clues they narrowed the search and began exploring areas of Europe where these trees weren't to be found. This lead them to the Pripyat River Valley, which is essentially a large

swamp in the Ukraine that had very little in the way of vegetation or trees. This is a kind of natural meaning in the proto-Slavic language because the gaps in their idiolect meant that they came from a place with no trees. Interestingly though we could apply this same form of methodology and logical inference when trying to unearth unconscious meanings as well. Instead of just looking for the content present in a given work and drawing conclusion about what is unconscious processes went on in the mind of the artist at the time of composition, we could look at what has been left out by the artist.

With this in mind my next example is taken from the TV show *The Simpsons*. *The Simpsons* is an animated sitcom created by Matt Groening, which follows the lives of a dysfunctional family living in suburban America. He named the characters after his own family, replacing himself with Bart, the rebellious son of Homer and Marge. Whilst *The Simpsons* is in many ways a standard situation comedy, the town of Springfield is taken to represent life in America and each episode tries to explore the issues faced in modern society. Homer is your stereotypical stupid America dad who drinks beer, often neglects his kids and seems to have no real concept of his place in the world. Through his job at the nuclear power plant the writers can comment on the environmental crisis as well as the difficulties that come with being an unintelligent slob. Similarly, through the children Bart and Lisa the writers commentate on the education system and the controversial cultural issues that accompany teenage life in America. Ned Flanders is the irritatingly cheery next-door neighbour who is also the local reverend. He is representative of the devout Evangelical bible belt of American society and Homer Simpson loathes him. Mr. Burns is the owner of Springfield's Nuclear Plant and he is portrayed as the evil, greedy rich man in town. Burns is almost certainly representative of the worst of corporate capitalist America and the writers use him as the "embodiment of corporate greed" (Rhodes 2000). These are just some of the many characters that represent the broad demographic of middle white America.

In *The Simpsons* there is also a character called Apu Nahasapeemapetilon. Apu is a convenience store owner well known for his catchphrase *'Thank you, come again.'* Apu from *The Simpsons* is, on the view I will defend, indicative of a kind of cultural racism. *The Simpsons* claims to ridicule a broad range of American life so no one cultural aspect is out of bounds. However, there are various white characters from different backgrounds, whereas Apu is taken to represent the entire spectrum of Asian and Middle Eastern culture in America. The absence of any variation in the show with regards to Asian culture is representative of an unconscious bias, which affects Groening's beliefs without him realising. He does not realise that in writing this single Asian character he is unconsciously reducing all the richness and diversity of Asian culture to Apu the shop owner.

This is not exactly the same as natural meaning found in the language of the Slavic people because it is revealing of an unconscious belief system at work in the mind of the artist which guides their decisions without them realising. Comedian Hari Kondabolu has criticised the portrayal of Apu as a negative stereotype of Indians and made a documentary entitled *The Problem with Apu* (Kondabolu 2017), which addresses some of these issues in more detail. The film explores racial micro-aggressions and prejudices against people of India and South Asia disseminated through the character in *The Simpsons*. Other critics such as Vij Manish (2007) have also criticised the character for being a racist caricature. In the case of Apu it is not just the content that is revealing of an unconscious bias toward Asian culture but also what is absent, namely the great range of Asian culture left out and neglected by the writers on *The Simpsons*. Whilst they may not acknowledge this is as a legitimate meaning tied to the character they intended to create, it is difficult to resist the view that the writers were guided by unconscious racial prejudice when constructing Apu in the script. I believe such an interpretation can be legitimately assigned in this case, even if it conflicts with the stated intentions of the writer(s). I will revisit and develop this example further in Chapter Four.

My final example is taken from an interview I conducted with Louise Giblin in 2019[9]. Louise Giblin is a British sculptor known for her body-casts of famous Olympic athletes. In 2011 Giblin began a project recording the physiques of five British athletes, one of which was a sculpture of Dame Kelly Holmes. This particular sculpture features twenty-five kilos of bronze carved out with a muscular back and an extraordinarily detailed front. Among other details it features medals, the columns of the British Museum, horses, athletes all set on the outline of the Union Jack flag. Throughout the artistic process with each work Giblin was sure she knew what intentions and motivations guided her. She was confident that her style was new and original. Giblin described to me that her intentions were to immortalise the female form in peak physical conditions, a form that would last for centuries. The project is intimate, an intense exploration of the human form coupled with a personal investigation into the athlete's life. In a way Giblin feels as though her sculptures are the athletes' armour and a protection that hides their insecurities beneath their achievements. Giblin cites her influences, her reasons for choosing these body-casts and the designs on them confidently and articulately.

Later, Giblin says that while she was exhibiting this art a member of the audience approaches her and claims she has seen something similar before, in the form of hieroglyphics on Egyptian

[9] Interview with Louise Giblin (6.10.19) Sculpture from Exhibition at Spa Galleries, 24 the Pantiles, Tunbridge Wells, TN2 5TN.

coffins. Suddenly Giblin recalls that in her childhood she had an obsession with Egyptian art on tombs and coffins. She remembers that she used to go and visit museums with her father and those memories had remained hidden from view until that moment. Immediately, she and other viewers can see a comparison between Giblin's sculpture and the ancient Egyptian coffins and sarcophagi. A sarcophagus was the stone container used by the ancient Egyptians to hold the coffins. The coffins themselves were usually carved to look like the person within and followed the natural curves of the mummies. The coffins were also decorated with depictions of Gods and scenes from the afterlife or physical features which were meant to show their status in society. Giblin points out that since she had quite an unhappy childhood, and a somewhat strained relationship with her father, she can see why these memories might have been repressed. The artist acknowledged the similarity almost immediately, as if these thoughts had been affecting her actions and choices in her work on a subliminal level for years but had only then resurfaced. Giblin's acknowledgement is rare, since artists do not always become privy to these unconscious intentions. However, regardless of rarity, these statements of intent are clearly important.

One might object that whilst this is an interesting insight into the artist's past it is not directly relevant to the interpretation of the work. But this is hardly convincing. Giblin acknowledges that her work strongly resembles and very likely alludes to the sacred Egyptian carvings she admired so much as a child. This changes our interpretation of the work. It now seems entirely appropriate to approach it as work that pays homage to Egyptian artwork and reveals a supressed fascination with the Egyptian culture. The piece is now as much about her unconscious passion for the finely glazed faience, ivories, architecture, sculptures, sarcophagi, paintings and papyrus that she admired in museums and in pictures as it is about the immortalised female form and the armour that protects her female athletes. It could also be understood as being about her father and this armour is her way of protecting herself from whatever unpleasantness she continues to repress in her past. Both of these form plausible unconscious interpretations of the work and they are based on the content of the work, the publicly available information about the artist and her private statements about her past. In the next chapter I will argue that these pronouncements made by the artist are directly relevant to the interpretation of their work and in Chapter Five I will argue that there is a difference between plausible and correct interpretations. There might be various, contradictory plausible interpretations, but all correct interpretations must be conjoinable into a single interpretation. In the case of Giblin's work, we have a series of plausible interpretations, both conscious and unconscious, which are not mutually exclusive and could be joined to form a single correct interpretation of her work.

2.7 Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that, when interpreting works of art, we should not focus exclusively on non-natural meaning as it has been traditionally understood. I have shown that Taylor's second category of natural meaning, which is taken to cover all other aspects of meaning, is too broad and fails to capture the subtle differences between unconscious meanings recovered from the work and basic inferences made about the artist from what they have produced. Investigations of these ideas often arrived in a particular style and this style was considered to lack the analytical rigour required for academic debate surrounding artistic intention. Therefore, any suggestion of natural meaning or the Marxist-Freudian derived hermeneutical approaches were ruled out as unclear, unsound or unconvincing. I have argued that we should introduce a new category called unconscious meaning that allows us to differentiate clearly between genuine instances of unintentional, natural meaning and instances where unconscious intentions need to be recognised in a work. Through my examples I have given very clear ways in which implicit bias and stereotyping can affect an agent's decision making unconsciously and I will further develop this work in Chapter Four when I return to look at these concepts more closely. I have given several examples of these unconscious meanings that can be recovered from works, from Dalí to *The Simpsons*. I have argued that in the case of Apu in particular the motivations which govern Matt Groening's work are in fact deeply offensive to the South Asian community in America and are indicative of an unconscious prejudice he holds. In Chapter Four I will give an account of racist humour and show that one can be racist without realising it, either because one has too narrow a conception of what constitutes racism or because one holds an implicit bias against certain groups, ideas or people. I will also revisit the case of Apu in order to show that we can interpret the character as racist despite Groening's protestations that it is not. When we undertake an action motivated by unconscious beliefs and attitudes, those unconscious attitudes provide a reason-based explanation for the action and these are unconscious intentional actions. In the first chapter we established that an intentional action is an action performed for reasons therefore an unconscious intentional action is an action performed for unconscious reasons. In the case of the latter, the reasons for action are unconscious or implicitly held beliefs and attitudes, which can then manifest themselves in the content of the work.

3. In Defence of Moderate Actual Intentionalism[10]

The extent to which the artist's intentions are a relevant consideration in the interpretation of art has long been the subject of critical debate. From the intentionalist camp two prominent positions have emerged, these are hypothetical intentionalism (HI) and moderate actual intentionalism (MAI). The prefix "moderate" is added to distinguish it from the more radical position absolute actual intentionalism. Absolute actual intentionalism claims that the actual intentions of the author are the *only* determining factor in the meaning of a work, whereas MAI claims that the sort of intention that is meaning-shaping is only a successfully realized intention. This is a subtly weaker claim. In contrast, HI argues that our best-informed hypothesis of the artist's intentions is all that is required in the interpretation of artworks.

What appears to be a subtle and innocuous distinction has in fact given rise to impassioned debate. The reason for this is that both HI and MAI agree, broadly speaking, on the basic criteria and nature of interpretation. In most cases the methodologies that separate the two sides will not necessarily yield different interpretive results. However, the key debating point between the two concerns warranted hypothesis and truth. In section 3.1 I will outline the current debate and explore the arguments on both sides. Recapitulating on the material briefly outlined in the introduction, I will expand on these positions and their criticisms. In section 3.2 I will discuss some previous test cases but I will focus on the examples from contemporary visual art put forward by Hans Maes (2010) and the responses from Karen Gover (2012). I argue that whilst Gover makes some compelling points, none of them are particularly damning. In sections 3.3 and 3.4 I present two new case studies of my own. The first in 3.3 is from British artist Matt Sharp who suffers from Tourette's syndrome. I argue that the hypothetical intentionalist might reasonably deduce that thick black lines made across his work were intentionally deployed as part of an abstract piece, but in fact this is not true at all. Only in an interview with Sharp was I able to find out that actually his physical tics were responsible for the lines and I explain why these private avowals of intent from the artist are relevant to the interpretation of his work. Whilst the tics are unintentional acts and so cannot be used to explicitly endorse the intentionalist position, I argue that this example serves to debunk hypothetical intentionalism because it shows that without the private avowals of intention from the artist, interpreters might misconstrue unintentional features of a work as intentional. Finally, in section 3.4 I offer another new test case from the field of literary theory, in the form

[10] This chapter is a modified version of Hulbert, F. (2021) *In Defence of Moderate Actual Intentionalism*. Aesthetic Investigations, Vol.4. No.2, pp.236-253 and has been reproduced with the permission of the copyright holder.

of Richard Yates's novel *Revolutionary Road*. This has famously been labelled an anti-suburban novel but Yates himself later rejected this interpretation in an interview. I argue that the avowals of intent made by the author are, again, relevant to the interpretation of his work. Whether or not these avowals are made public is of little consequence to their epistemic relevance as evidence.

3.1 The Current Debate

In the field of aesthetic theory there are many interpretive positions one might adopt. At one end of the spectrum we have the anti-intentionalism which came to prominence in the mid twentieth century. Anti-intentionalists such as Wimsatt and Beardsley (1946) do not accept that we should interpret a complex object formed of both the work and the intentions of the artist. They argue that the content of the work determines the meaning and so there is no reason to add an arbitrary component like intentions of artists in order to make sense of it. This argument is predicated upon the idea that creative works are autonomous objects and ultimately interpretive claims made should be tested against the work rather than any arbitrary external features. For the anti-intentionalist, the conventions of the time are often the essential standards for the purposes of establishing work-meaning. Several powerful objections may be levelled against anti-intentionalism, chiefly that it mischaracterises intentions as private inaccessible mental phenomena (Wittgenstein 1953, p100e), unconnected with the work and that convention alone is not sufficient to establish work-meaning in many cases (Hirsch 1967). One of the reasons there is substantial debate in the field of interpretation is precisely because clear meanings do not always present themselves immediately in creative works. Appealing to conventional meaning or even word sequence meaning, the sort we obtain from dictionaries, rules of grammar and linguistic conventions, will not suffice for the purposes of interpretation because it fails to take identity-relevant contextual factors into consideration. Instances of irony are often cited to demonstrate this distinction because they depend, in part, on context (Carroll 2000). To the superficial eye an ironic comment and an un-ironic comment follow the same rules of grammar and linguistic conventions; irony, however, expresses an agent's meaning precisely by using language that normally signifies the opposite.

For those sympathetic to the anti-intentionalist cause, there is also the value-maximisation theory (Davies 2007). This theory has its origins in anti-intentionalism but makes slightly different claims. The value-maximising theory claims that the primary goal of any interpretation is to maximise the value of the work, which is a different interpretive norm. It is not always clear exactly what constitutes the optimal value of a work but so long as the interpretation conforms to some relevant interpretive criteria and appears to be perceptive or

revealing, then it could count as value-maximising. Value-maximisation allows for a plurality of possible interpretations to be acceptable simultaneously because there might be a number of interpretations that give us an insight into the value of the work. This position is more versatile than the previous anti-intentionalist position because it does not exclude contextual factors that might be relevant when forming an interpretation.

At the other end of the spectrum we have absolute actual intentionalism (AAI). AAI believes that the meaning of a work is identical to the *utterer's meaning*. Utterer's meaning refers to what was meant by the artist or author (Grice 1968). In contrast, *utterance meaning* appreciates that a text requires interpretation because it has a kind of autonomy and within the coordinates of this debate it is defined as the meaning of a text used on a particular occasion. We are not trying to "defer as quickly" to what the person meant in literary interpretation as we are in conversation (Levinson 1996, p.183). This is significant because, as Monroe Beardsley has pointed out, "if a sculptor tells us that his statue was intended to be smooth and blue but our senses tells us it is rough and pink, we go by our senses" (Beardsley 1958, p.20). Such a statement made by an artist is known as "Humpty-Dumptyism" (Davies 2006a, p.85). Additionally, work meaning cannot be identical to utterer's meaning because an artist can "fail to convey" certain meanings in their work (Carroll 2000, p.79).

Nearby there is also extreme actual intentionalism (Stock 2017). In the extreme version the meaning of a work is determined by the intentions of the artist except when the intentions do not match the content of the work. In these cases where the artist's intentions are incompatible with the content of the work, then the work is rendered meaningless (Hirsch 1967). However, the notion that works can be rendered meaningless is largely unsatisfactory as a means of explanation because even if the artist fails to realise her intentions, the work still seems to contain some meaning and so two more modest positions have emerged: hypothetical intentionalism (HI) and moderate actual intentionalism (MAI).

HI and MAI prefer to think of work meaning in terms of utterance meaning. Whilst intuitively, understanding an utterance requires consideration of the speaker's intentions, the value-maximisation theory endorses the utterance model while denying the intentions of the artist are necessarily relevant. In MAI the artist's stated intentions are not as conclusive as they are in AAI. If the stated intentions appear to be disingenuous or are not supported by evidence in the work then both HI and MAI will disregard them or say that the artist has failed to realize her intention in the work. In cases where the artist's stated intentions are not supported by the work, MAI argues that the meaning of the work defaults to conventional meanings. Both camps also believe that the primary goal of interpretation is to establish what the artist intended to

convey through her work. For the most part HI and MAI even agree on the appropriate methods and grounds for conjecture about these intentions. The social, cultural or historical context, the artist's body of work and the genre are all on the table as well as publicly available knowledge about the artist that might be relevant. They allow all of this information to be admissible in the interpretation of a work of art.

A crucial point that separates HI from MAI is that the former will not allow private statements of intent made by the artist to count in the available body of evidence. The main reason for this is that proponents of HI believe the work should be able to stand alone in so far as any meaning successfully conveyed should be recoverable by reference to the work itself rather than pronouncements of intent from the artist. HI's dismissal of these semantic intentions is based on the implicit contract between the artist and the audience, which says it is implausible to ask the interpreter to possess private information about the author. If someone writes a novel, it is too much to demand the reader know personal things about the author in order to understand the work. As Levinson has said, works should not "require artists to explain" what they mean (Levinson 1996, p.208). For HI, only a fully informed and educated guess at the artist's intended meaning is necessary. In some variations of HI (Nelles 2011, Booth 1961), the audience projects these intentions onto an implied figure, which acts as an intermediary between the work and the artist. The implied figure is useful not least because it allows us to assign and discuss the beliefs, attitudes and values of the artist without referencing anything outside of the immediate work. The interpreter's task is "to surmise what a hypothetical author could have intended the work to mean" (Davies 2006a, p.223). Most proponents of HI stress that the best warranted hypothesis as to the artist's intentions is the one that is most likely to be right given the structure of the work and the relevant context. In cases where there are two equally sound interpretations on offer, hypothetical intentionalists advocate for the interpretation which is most favourable in an artistic sense.

> [I]f we can make the author out to have created a cleverer or more striking or more imaginative work, without violating the image of his oeuvre underpinned by the total available textual and contextual evidence, we should perhaps do so (Levinson 1996, p.179)

The implied author is not the only mechanism by which we might understand HI. Levinson equivocates on this issue but in the end argues for a different conception of HI. He says that whilst this may be characteristic of other HIs, it is not a fair reflection of his own beliefs. Levinson himself prefers that his hypotheses relate to the actual author in so far as they "attempt

to arrive at what that author is most plausibly and charitably understood as meaning via the text he or she has produced and put forward as a literary work" (Levinson 2017, p.148).

In contrast, MAIs do not omit any relevant evidence such as the artist's pronouncements of intention, in attempting to establish the meaning of a work. Whilst in most cases HI and MAI yield the same interpretative results, this difference can sometimes lead to a disparity between the artist's stated intentions and the hypothesis of an informed audience. In cases where such a disparity occurs the MAI will defend the interpretation consonant with the artist's stated intentions. Exceptions to this rule are instances where we have reasons to believe that the artist's stated intentions are insincere, unreliable or more generally not supported by the text.

Often, particularly in the reviews of literature and film, critics assume that a thorough study of the work, the author's biography, other works in the genre and any culturally relevant facts will allow them to arrive at the artist's intentions without needing accompanied statements by the artist. However, as Carroll has pointed out, whilst this is a prudent default position it should not be applied so stringently as to rule out relevant evidence, such as the pronouncement of artistic intention, should such evidence present itself. According to MAI, this evidence would undoubtedly be considered relevant and would "play a justifiable role" in any complete interpretation and it does not violate any rules of good interpretative practice (Carroll 2013, p.330).

Whilst both MAI and HI agree that utterance meaning is a good model for interpreting works of art, they don't completely agree on what utterance meaning actually is. For MAI utterance meaning is determined by the artist's actual intentions as they are realised in the work (Maes 2010). If the artist's intentions fail then meaning is determined by convention and context instead. For HI the meaning of an utterance is the intended meaning attributed to the artist by an informed audience. HI says the primary meaning of a work is synonymous with the best-hypothesised intentions of the author given all the appropriate reader data (Levinson 1996). Additionally, there has been some debate about whether artistic interpretation should remain methodologically distinct from linguistic interpretation. Intentionalists on both sides of the divide generally agree that if, in ordinary conversation, a speaker's utterance is unclear we may ask them for clarification as to what they meant. Whether or not we can be afforded the same luxury in relation to art is the point of departure. HI argues that clarification from the artist should not be sought because the artwork does not function like the utterance found in a conversation. Many proponents of MAI believe that the work of art operates much like a conversational utterance (Carroll 1992).

As a consequence, MAI concludes that the meaning of an utterance is that which is intended by the utterer and successfully conveyed. Proponents of HI usually object that 1) this requires success and failure standards to be available that do not rely on intention-based criteria. These standards would allow us to establish objectively whether or not an utterer had succeeded in conveying their intentions. 2) That moderate actual intentionalists such as Carroll face the accusation that it is difficult to attribute certain intentions, states of mind or motivations to the actual author with any real degree of certainty. The nature of art is such that the artist might be trying to portray a certain image of herself through her work, which is not necessarily an accurate depiction of her. Instead it would be prudent to confine our attributions to the implied figure constructed as an intermediary between the work and the audience.

In response to 1) both Iseminger (1996) and Carroll (2013) have set up success conditions for establishing the artist's actual intentions. They claim that the meaning of an artistic utterance is decided by the artist's actual intentions in cases where they are justifiably supported by the content and form of the work understood in the relevant context. In response to 2) Taylor (2014) has pointed out that recognising the presence of natural meaning renders this argument somewhat unconvincing. Since unconscious meaning and natural meaning present themselves in the work without the awareness of the artist, we are less likely to accept that the work is a completely artificial construction of an artist trying to portray a carefully crafted image to the public. In the case of natural meaning the artist does not intend to convey this kind of meaning and in the case of unconscious meaning the artist is unaware that certain factors have played a role in influencing her reasons for action. These "uncensored" motivations and states of mind present themselves directly in the content of the work and when we interpret them as such we are engaging with the actual artist rather than the implied figure (Taylor 2014, p.385).

HI has its problems too. Levinson argues that the meaning of a work is our best-hypothesised intention having analysed all the information that might be relevant to an audience. It is not clear exactly from Levinson's writing what constitutes the appropriate information or indeed what constitutes the appropriate audience. In some places he suggests that the appropriately informed audience is an audience with the required knowledge to understand the content of the work. At other times he argues "we may be guided in identifying an appropriate audience […] by certain norms and conventions understood to define the sphere of literary production and reception" (Levinson 1996, p.183). This second definition implies that we can generally establish the kind of evidence that an appropriate audience might have at their disposal. This evidence would include the artist's oeuvre, the genre of the work, linguistic and artistic convention of the culture and the time, socio-political developments and other contextual

features that might be relevant or would have had an impact on the artist at the time of composition.

Putting aside for a moment the circularity present in at least one of these definitions, it is interesting that each definition could potentially yield different interpretive results. In many cases it won't matter which definition you employ but one could imagine cases where certain specialist knowledge was required to properly understand and interpret the work. Rather than outline every point of contention between the two sides, I will move on to examine some test case that have been used in the debate.

3.2 Previous Test Cases

In his book *Intention and Interpretation* (1992), Gary Iseminger examines the opening lines of a poem written by Gerard Manley Hopkins, titled *Henry Purcell*.

> HAVE, fair fallen, O fair, fair have fallen, so dear,
> To me, so arch-especial a spirit as heaves in Henry Purcell,
> An age is now since passed, since parted, with the reversal,
> Of the outward sentence low lays him, listed to a heresy, here.
> (Pick 1953, p.16)

According to Iseminger, there are two possible interpretations of this verse and both are legitimately attributable. He argues that if the two are equally legitimate then the one that is consonant with the artist's intentions is the one that is true (Iseminger 1992). Referring to a letter written by Hopkins, he argues that the author's use of "fair fall" in the poem is an economical rephrasing of "fair (fortune be) fall". In the letter Hopkins is clearly concerned that an alternate reading might be found. He writes,

> One thing disquiets me: I meant "fair fall" to mean fair (fortune be) fall; it has since struck me that perhaps "fair" is an adjective proper and in the predicate and can only be used in cases like "fair fall the day," that is, may the day fall, turn out, fair. My line will yield a sense that way indeed, but I never meant it so. (Pick 1953, p.142)

Iseminger argues that this pronouncement from Hopkins is necessary to decide between two equally plausible interpretations of the poem and proves that moderate actual intentionalism is superior. However, Levinson disagrees, arguing instead that a careful study of Hopkins' rather unique style often employed in his poetic metre together with his well-documented admiration

for Purcell and a desire to remain logically consistent with the rest of the poem, makes this conclusion available to the audience without resorting to consultation of the poet's stated intentions (Levinson 1996).

Many more cases have been invoked in the field of literary theory from *The Turn of The Screw* by Henry James (Carroll 2000) to works by William Blake such as *Jerusalem* (Iseminger 1996) and *The Sick Rose* (Stecker 2001). However, still no decisive test case has been put forward.

Hans Maes (2010) has suggested a different kind of test case, drawing on examples from contemporary visual art rather than literary works. He offers up two specific examples, which he argues would yield different interpretive results when we include the direct pronouncements of intention by the artist. The first painting by Gadha Amer entitled *Anjie*, is a large acrylic and gel medium. Thin lines of colour run down the canvas covering a spectrum of colours between yellow and red. Beneath these lines there appear to be some figures outlined in black although it is not exactly clear from looking what these figures represent. Maes goes on to cite a review of this painting by Arthur Danto in a review for *The Nation*. Therein Danto says that the finely drawn abstractions and the meaning behind them cannot be deduced from looking at the painting. As it turns out the abstract figures in the painting are taken from images of naked women in magazines. Danto argues that we would not know without help from the artist that this painting was a political statement about the representation and objectification of women (Danto 2005).

The second example Maes offers up is an installation by the Italian artist Benedetto Pietromarchi and was part of the exhibition *Reconstruction #1*. The exhibition consists of two large light bulbs, lit and sat on platforms in the dungeons of Sudeley Castle. Interviews with the artist reveal that the piece of art is about childhood and the filaments, which burn bright within the bulbs, evoke specific memories for the artist (Maes 2010).

Maes argues that in both of these cases we will reach a different interpretive conclusion if we do not consult the stated intentions of each artist. Levinson's appropriate and informed audience would not have reached these conclusions using the publicly available and relevant evidence. It is difficult to see in the first case that the figures depict naked women, without which the feminist connotations would not be drawn. We also do not usually associate large light bulbs, sat on stone platforms in dungeons with childhood. Furthermore there is nothing in his background, biography or information made public at the show to suggest that childhood had anything to do with the meaning behind Pietromarchi's installation.

In reply, K. E. Gover (2012) has argued that neither of these examples succeed as defining test cases in defence of MAI. Gover says that the first case fails because it conflates a fact about the work with the artist's intentions in the work and the second fails because works of contemporary abstract art cannot realistically be considered utterances.

Beginning with the latter, Gover points out that if utterances cannot mean just anything then neither can works of abstract art. It has long been argued by MAI (Stecker 2006, Carroll 2000) that an author cannot simply attribute any meaning they choose to their work, just as a person cannot attribute any meaning they choose to what they say. For Gover the fact that abstract contemporary visual art can provide so many examples which divide MAI and HI is not indicative of a treasure trove, as Maes suggests, but rather that this kind of art provides unsuitable examples for the purposes of our debate. Indeed one of the salient points which separates MAI from absolute intentionalism is the fact that the artist cannot be given unconditional authority on the meaning of their work (Hirsch 1967). Gover accuses Maes of doing just this, reacquainting us with the term "Humpty Dumptyism". In Lewis Carroll's book *Through the Looking Glass*, Humpty Dumpty tells Alice that he can make a word mean whatever he wants it to mean.

> 'I don't know what you mean by "glory,"' Alice said.
> Humpty Dumpty smiled contemptuously. 'Of course you don't — till I tell you. I meant "there's a nice knock-down argument for you!"'
> 'But "glory" doesn't mean "a nice knock-down argument,"' Alice objected.
> 'When *I* use a word,' Humpty Dumpty said in rather a scornful tone, 'it means just what I choose it to mean — neither more nor less.' (Carroll 1997, p.74-75)

Both HI and MAI reject Humpty Dumptyism. In light of this, Gover questions whether a pair of huge bulbs in a dungeon can sensibly be said to represent Pietromarchi's childhood. Furthermore, she is concerned that we might not be able to distinguish these cases from cases where the artist fails to successfully convey their intentions through their work (Gover 2012). The installation could be about anything, indeed Maes acknowledges that HI could come up with three other readings which make at "least as much as much sense" (Maes 2010, p.136) as Pietromarchi's own pronouncements of intention.

The question of possible failed intentions is one that Maes attempts to deal with when he says that we use artistic statements of intent all the time in the art world to make sense of the work and that Pietromarchi's statements are supported by the content of the work. Gover rejects this

on the grounds that if a light bulb can be a legitimate universal reference to childhood then the minimum success condition is so minimal that it is almost impotent.

In the case of Ghada Amer's abstract canvas, Gover recounts the steps that led Maes to conclude it was making a feminist statement. We are reminded of the abstract images in the style of Cy Twombly, which turn out to be sewn into the canvas. Amer tells us that the scribbles are derived from pornographic images of women but it is almost impossible to find the connection between her works and the original sources of inspiration and influence. This is also true of many of Amer's previous works such as *Anjie*. Maes concludes that without Amer's explanation as to the nature of the abstract figures we cannot outline an accurate interpretation of this piece. Maes also cites Danto who admits that Amer's pronouncements change our interpretation from that of a formalist exercise to a feminist statement addressing the objectification of women (Danto 2005).

Gover concedes that a viewer might not be able to discern from looking alone that the images were derived from pornography, but that this is a fact about the work rather than an interpretation of it. Gover argues that we may then infer what the meaning of the work is given this relevant fact, but that the statement of fact itself is not the same as a statement of intent. Gover is accusing Maes of conflating a statement of intent with a fact about the work (Gover 2012). Gover goes on to argue that since Maes is ambiguous about whether these are explanations of Amer's work or reports of her intentions, and that since the fact that separates HI and MAI is the inclusion of direct pronouncements of intent by the artist, Maes has overstated his case when he concludes that the two camps would yield entirely different interpretations of Amer's work. Gover then concludes that after consultation of the appropriate publicly available evidence, such as the rest of Amer's work, a HI would arrive at the same conclusion.

With regards to Pietromarchi's work Gover has a point, although in the force of her objection Gover must be careful not to suggest that Pietromarchi is guilty of forming a private language in his work. Introduced by Wittgenstein in the *Philosophical Investigations*, the private language argument states that the very concept of a private language, understood by only the single individual who 'speaks' it, is incoherent. The significance of the private language argument is of central importance to the nature of language and by logical extension to the nature of art interpretation where said interpretation is concerned with utterance meaning. One theory of language states that language connects words to ideas that reside in the mind. In this theory, ideas and experiences are separate to language and these private experiences are distinct from the private experiences of others. We are able to communicate because we can match the

private experiences in our heads with a common symbol, word or sign in our language or shared culture. Our private experiences form a private language, which we then translate into a common language that we can share. An example of this kind of theory can be found in John Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1948).

Wittgenstein (1953) has argued that this account is inconsistent. This is not a language which has failed to be adequately translated yet but a language or an expression understood as necessarily comprehensible only to the utterer, because the rules which define its meaning are necessarily inaccessible to others. The reason this account makes no sense is that such a language would also be unintelligible to the utterer since they would be unable to give meanings for the signs (Rhees, Smythies & Taylor 1966, Hagberg 1998).

There is a sense in which Gover is suggesting that these mental phenomena, which accompany the meaning of the work, are totally inaccessible to the public and therefore they constitute an utterance that only the artist himself could understand. If she was not suggesting this to be the case Gover would have simply said that Pietromarchi needed to elaborate on his explanation so that we might all share the salient information needed to fully understand and appreciate the way the work expresses its meaning. If Pietromarchi gave more detail it might become clear how and why the light bulbs represent his childhood. Instead she seems to say that since these private experiences cannot be matched to a common symbol shared by Pietromarchi and the audience in the work they are no more legitimate for the purposes of interpretation than any of the other hypothetical interpretations offered up earlier. An ungenerous reading of Gover might find she was arguing that whilst light bulbs mean private childhood memories to Pietromarchi, they couldn't mean the same thing to anyone else. This is a version of private language, which Wittgenstein famously warned against.

> The words of this language are to refer to what can be known only to the speaker; to his immediate, private, sensations. So another cannot understand the language. (Wittgenstein 1953, p.95)

A private language is not misunderstood because no translation is available, it is one that *cannot* be translated into a common language we can all understand. This is the sort of meaning Gover seems to have in mind of Pietromarchi's lightbulb. However, Wittgenstein says that this is incoherent because a language that is incoherent to the public would also necessarily be incoherent to the agent because no meanings could be established for the signs. Nevertheless, the danger remains that given the somewhat abstract relationship between light bulbs and childhood, Pietromarchi could claim a number of intentional meanings that could be interpreted

as plausibly supported by the content of his work and thus fulfil the minimum success condition laid down earlier.

Although Gover makes some compelling points about contemporary visual and abstract art, the burden of proof still lies with Gover to some extent. Whilst she has claimed that conceptual art of this kind does not count as an utterance, she has not suggested how it would be categorically different to other kinds of art. The responsibility surely rests with Gover here to show how the interpretation differs in cases of contemporary visual art. Nevertheless, MAI still requires a case where HI could form the best interpretation of the work given the relevant context, but the author's pronouncements of intention run counter to the best interpretation of the standalone work. In this case we would need to be satisfied that the artist's stated intentions were sincere and supported by the work, such that the interpretation meets the minimum success conditions outlined earlier. For the remainder of this paper I want to offer two test cases, first is another example from contemporary visual art and the second is a literary test case.

3.3 The Art of Tourette's

Matt Sharp is a British artist who suffers from Tourette's syndrome. This neurodevelopmental disorder is characterised by both verbal and physical tics, which tend to worsen over time. Sharp is no exception but the tics occasionally stop for Sharp when he paints. The tics became so violent for Sharp that on one occasion he paralysed himself from the waist down and he is now confined to a wheelchair. Some of his works are in a Post-Impressionist style while some are more abstract. At times he uses vivid colours to depict objects in life, but he often emphasises certain shapes while distorting form for expressive effect. Other times he seems to take abstract forms and colours to convey an emotion or feeling. Below are two works by Sharp, one *(fig.2)* entitled *Two Faced* and the other *(fig.3)* entitled *Three Boats*.



(fig.2) Matt Sharp *Two Faced*, Oil Pastel on Canvas, 2008



(fig.3) Matt Sharp *Three Boats*, Acrylic Paint and sand, 2010

The earlier work depicts two faces beneath some rather aggressive black lines. There are various plausible interpretations immediately supported by contextual evidence. Knowing what we do about Sharp's ailment, the tragic difficulties he faced in care[11] and seeing other works of the same period executed much more fluently and with brighter colours, HI may well conclude that the lines are intentionally deployed and that the painting might be about the two sides of his personality. Therefore, HI could interpret this as an attempt to highlight the darker side of his illness. HI might argue that this work represents a definite change in style with a view to painting more emotive and abstract subject matter. However, in a private conversation with me, Sharp (2019) pointed out that the scorched black lines in the earlier painting *Two Faced* were actually just a result of his tics jerking the pastels around the canvas. Whilst the effects of Tourette's can be intermittent or temporarily suppressed, there are occasions where Sharp's tics take over during his painting and drawing. This was one of those occasions, but we would not know this without the pronouncements of intent from the artist. Sharp had also recently taken an interest in Picasso, whose works he identified with and this was originally an attempt to pay homage to his style. This claim certainly seems to be supported by the content of the work, as the picture is reminiscent of Picasso's cubist portraits, particularly *The Weeping Woman*.

We would expect that with his illness the tics would grow worse over time, therefore if the tics were causing the aggressive brush strokes they should appear more apparent and exaggerated in his later works. However, in the earlier work *Two Faced* these aggressive, abstract lines appear and in the later work *Three Boats* they do not. Studying the work together with the publicly available information and other works in the artist's oeuvre, would surely yield the conclusion that the thick black lines are intentionally used for artistic effect. However, after speaking to the artist we find out that these black lines are accidental and a result of the physical tics from the Tourette's syndrome. At this point the interpretation of HI becomes problematic because we have no reason to believe that he was trying to convey some inner conflict to the audience. To insist on the hypothetical intentionalist interpretation would require interpreting unintentional features of the work as intentional when we have clear evidence to suggest they are not. For HI the meaning of an utterance is the intended meaning attributed to the artist by an informed audience, but excluding these avowals of intent on the grounds that they are not

[11] George, Sarah. 'Leatherhead care home tells paralysed artist he can no longer paint because he might hurt himself', Surrey Live (online) 18th October 2017. This article documents alleged abuse from Sharp's carers and cites that he was no longer allowed to paint in the art room because it had a beam and the carers were concerned that he might hang himself from it if left unsupervised.

publicly available information means knowingly establishing what appears to be an incorrect interpretation.

One possible reply from HI might be that while the lines were accidental they were later intentionally sanctioned by the artist. Since Sharp decided to continue painting in spite of the lines caused by his tics, he has built the thick black lines into the work and sanctioned them in such a way that they have become an interpretable feature. Sherri Irvin has discussed this matter in her paper.

> The artist's sanction may serve to fix the boundaries of his or her work, to determine whether a particular feature is relevant to the work's interpretation, […] in some cases to determine whether it, qua artwork, has a particular feature or not. (Irvin 2005, pp.315-316)

However, this reply gets HI no further forward because Irvin argues that sanctioning gives the artist a "special authority" (Irvin 2005, p.316) on these matters. The act of sanctioning might reinforce the idea that he is resilient and willing to persevere in spite of his Tourette's, but it does not legitimise the view that this work is about the two sides to his personality or the depression associated with his illness.

MAI is underpinned by the idea that intentions need to be successfully realised in the work in order for them to be accepted in an interpretation. This trait separates MAI from absolute intentionalism. In that sense, this case cannot be a defence of MAI because unintentional actions, such as tics caused by Tourette's syndrome, cannot function as a way to endorse an intentionalist theory of interpretation. However, what it demonstrates is that HI is not always adequately equipped to arrive at accurate interpretations. In cases such as these, the private avowals of intention are crucial to properly understanding the content of the work.

3.4 A Revolutionary Test Case

Published in 1961 Richard Yates's debut novel *Revolutionary Road* follows the lives of Frank and April Wheeler in 1950's suburban America. The Wheelers are depressed by their surroundings and desperate to break out of their suburban rut in search of a better life. Initially the excitement and anticipation reignite their romance but when they conceive a third child and Frank is offered a promotion at work their plans begin to fall apart. Both conducting affairs, overwhelmed by the situation and suffering from existential crises, their marriage breaks down.

In a failed attempt to perform an abortion on her child April dies from blood loss and Frank is left distraught and guilt-ridden.

Since publication Yates has been widely regarded as a critic of American post-war suburban life. When Vintage Publishing reissued the book it chose to include in the blurb that the novel was an "evocative portrayal of the opulent desolation of the American suburbs" (Yates 2007). Comparisons have been made with *The Great Gatsby*, partly because Yates was a fan of Scott F. Fitzgerald. These comparisons suggest that both books should be read as attacks on suburbia. Other critics such as Richard Price who described Yates as a "master purveyor of the crushed suburban life" (Price 2008, p.9) and Christopher Hitchens who praised his ability to "anatomise the ills and woes of suburbia" (Hitchens 2008) have also drawn an anti-suburban interpretation of the book. This classification may in part have to do with the cultural context surrounding the novel at the time of publication. Various other works such as Sloane Wilson's *The Man in the Grey Flannel Suit* were revered as attacks on the social backdrop, where people battled against the system in search of purpose. In fact, when Yates initially submitted the book to Little, Brown and Company it was rejected for publication on the grounds that it "imitated" (Bailey 2003, p.178) Wilson's earlier work.

There are two possible interpretations, which seem wholly compatible with the text and its themes:

> i) Whilst suburban life is what they perceive to be the obstacle holding them back from achieving their dreams, it is in fact Frank's own fear, cowardice and the fact that he is decidedly unremarkable that stops him from moving to Paris and starting afresh.
>
> ii) Whilst it is true the Wheelers are being cowardly and seem to be blaming the suburbs for their own shortcomings, they have become "institutionalised" by their socio-economic conditions and that conditioning is fundamentally responsible for their cowardice. The suburban culture that Yates' seems to deride in his novel is in fact responsible for their failures and the freedom to which they felt so close was only ever an illusion. They had become like prisoners unable to liberate themselves.

In the absence of any direct pronouncements of intention from the author, the second interpretation seems preferable for at least two reasons.

1) The specific passages and content suggesting that suburbia is responsible for institutionalising the Wheelers beyond their control. Like the character Brooks in the film

Shawshank Redemption who cannot cope with the prospect of a world outside because he has been institutionalised by prison, the Wheelers have become institutionalised by suburban life.

> Intelligent, thinking people could take things like this in their stride, just as they took the larger absurdities of deadly dull jobs in the city and deadly dull homes in the suburbs. Economic circumstances might force you to live in this environment, but the important thing was to keep from being contaminated. (Yates 2007, p.20)

"Contaminated" is an important word in this passage, as contamination suggests exposure to pollution or poison which might affect us in ways we cannot control. Yates seems to present Frank as this enlightened persona to make the point that even being wise to the power of suburban malaise is not always enough to liberate oneself from its grasp. As the book goes on there are suggestions that this infection is starting to spread without Frank realising. At one point Frank says,

> Still, I don't suppose one picture window is necessarily going to destroy our personalities (Yates 2007, p.29)

This passage seems deliberately dramatic as though it is a warning to the reader of a man who has underestimated the power of these seemingly innocuous details. One might sensibly conclude from this that Yates wants us to see how even clever men can be victims of circumstance, unable to properly fulfil their potential because of the social and economic pressures. Yates's other characters are in keeping with this trend; trapped in ordinary lives they are desperate to escape.

Another continuity between his characters is their constant battle against the culture in which they find themselves. It is not necessarily war or the civil rights struggle that incites moral indignation for the characters but rather a sense of conformity that they find difficult to come to terms with. On rare occasions Yates' himself expresses political indignation, but this is not the same as the existential struggles of his characters. In his later work *Young Hearts Crying*, Yates comes as close to making a political statement as he does in any of his work when the characters find themselves discussing the Vietnam War. Davenport, who is a teacher in Kansas, and his wife Sarah are due to hold a party and they are dreading the hordes of anti-war protesters who usually turned up to these events. Terry Ryan, an old friend of Davenport attends the party on his way through to fight in Vietnam. Whilst he is there another guest named Grace asks him why he wants to kill people abroad. He plays down the remark respectfully and moves on with the conversation. The following day Davenport and Sarah drive Terry to the airport and on

route he refers to Vietnam as the "war that nobody would ever understand" (Yates 2007, p.249). Later that day Grace's husband rings Davenport to complain that Terry was unpleasant to Grace, based on lies Grace has told about their interactions. This sequence of events is particularly interesting as Yates shows the pernicious lies and attacks of Grace are not born out of moral outrage but rather following the trendy opposition to the Vietnam war at the time (Naparsteck 2011). Yates's own political statement comes through in his insistence that we should not blame the soldier for war. A sentiment reiterated in the short stories *Jody Rolled the Bones* and *A Special Providence*. Instead we should focus on the structures that govern our lives and inhibit individual freedom.

Returning to *Revolutionary Road*, this criticism of the suburban structures that control their lives seems to be reinforced when Mrs. Givings brings her son John to the Wheeler's house for lunch. John is described in the book as insane but actually he is a brutally honest character who condemns his mother's banal suburban lifestyle at the dinner table. The Wheeler's feel uncomfortable with these comments because they recognise many of the dull suburban traits John is criticising in their own lives. John's characterisation as insane could be interpreted ironically, as he is the only person able to see sense in an otherwise dull existence.

2) The biographical evidence at the time of writing gives us a clue as to his opinions and beliefs about themes such as marriage. It is well known that Yates's fiction was largely autobiographical in nature. Indeed, a lot of his work included actual events from his life. In addition, we cannot help but draw timeline parallels between Yates's life and the lives of his characters. Yates was born in 1926, making him 17 in 1943, the same age as William Grove in *A Good School*. He was 29 in 1955, as was Frank Wheeler in *Revolutionary Road*. Finally he was 36 in 1962, the age of Emily Grimes in *The Easter Parade*.

Revolutionary Road was published in 1961 and Yates got divorced just two years previously in 1959. This would definitely have had an impact on his writing about marriage. The very fact that confusion was caused in the interpretation of his writing on this subject is indicative of internal conflict with respect to his views on marriage.

There are various reasons to believe that *Revolutionary Road* is a political attack on the system, even the title of the work suggests this. Politically Yates identified as a "liberal" (Naparsteck 2011, p.91) and in America liberalism is associated with the welfare-state policies from the New Deal and the Democratic administration of President Roosevelt. Libertarianism has since taken up the defence of laissez-faire capitalism and unlike in Britain, the term "liberal" in the United States refers to Social Liberalism. In any case, American liberal values are thought to

generally support equality and liberty. These political values support the idea that freedom of the individual is of central importance and Yates represents the socio-economic conditions of 1950's suburban America as restricting the Wheelers individual liberties. Richard Yates was also the speechwriter for attorney general Robert F. Kennedy who was a prominent member of the Democratic Party.

Based on all this, HI could easily have formed the opinion, as many critics did, that the book was an attack on marriage and suburban America in the 1950s. However, Yates was interviewed later and insisted that whilst the Wheelers blamed the suburbs for their problems, it was in fact their own shortcomings that were to blame. In the case of Frank Wheeler, Yates never meant for us to identify with him as a character, but rather wanted us to realise that Frank was an unexceptional man, a hopeless romantic who was a victim of his own pride and arrogance.

In an interview Yates was asked why he "lambasted the suburbs" (Clark 2011, p.208). Yates replied,

> I didn't mean to. The book was widely read as an anti-suburban novel, and that disappointed me. The Wheelers may have thought the suburbs were to blame for all their problems, but I meant it to be implicit in the text that that was *their* delusion. (Clark 2011, p.208)

As we have discussed the book is also said to have been an attack on marriage.

> [Interviewer]: You weren't knocking marriage?
>
> Oh, of course not. That's another false interpretation too many people put on the book. (Clark 2011, p.209)

Yates blames Alfred Kazin, at least in part for this misinterpretation. Kazin was a critic who the publishers reached out to for a reaction and then took his response and quoted it on the front cover of the book. However, Kazin was only doing what any astute reader would do and attending to Yates's commentary on marriage as it stands alone in the work. Furthermore, Kazin's commentary was included on the cover of the final publication of the book so it would be quite reasonable or understandable for the hypothetical intentionalist to believe that these views were in accordance with those of the author.

The content to which I have referred could and should be interpreted differently in light of Yates's interview. Yates says that his intentions were not to attack suburban life or indeed the institution of marriage, but without his pronouncements of intent we would not necessarily draw this conclusion from the text, publicly available and relevant biographical information or other writings in his oeuvre. Yates's commentary contextualises his work such that we can see that Frank's character is motivated by, and grounded in, his vanity and a delusional stylised conception of himself as an anti-suburban intellectual. If we read the text in light of Yates's interview we can clearly see that he was trying to show Frank's inadequacies. For instance, when he is quizzed about his job at Knox Business Machines by John he replies, "[I] sort of help sell them, I guess. I don't really have much to do with the machines themselves; I work in the office. Actually it's a sort of stupid job. I mean there's nothing – you know, interesting about it, or anything" (Yates 2007, p.187). The inarticulate stumbling response and the explanation of his menial job should alert the reader to the fact that Frank is an unremarkable man. A man who commits adultery, who insults Norma Townsend by calling her a lesbian, and who is totally lacking in qualities such as courage or wisdom.

Given that we are not usually mistaken about our intentions and that the claims made by the artist are sufficiently supported by the work, then it seems curious to argue, as the hypothetical intentionalist is bound to do, that these claims are not a relevant consideration when interpreting their work.

HI does allow for pronouncements made by the artist to be admissible provided these pronouncements are publicly available. In reply, HI might claim that this does not constitute publicly available information. However, HI does not always adequately distinguish between public and private information (Carroll 2001). According to Levinson the relevant public context admissible should be construed as that which the artist wanted the audience to know about his intentions. He says if information that had been deliberately concealed later came to light it still does not constitute admissible information from public context (Levinson 2006). However, Yates never tried to conceal anything about his intentions, indeed he thought his intentions were made clear in his writing. After all, his corroborating statements of intent published later are wholly compatible with an interpretation of his work. It seems curious for HI to hold on to their hypothesis when newly discovered evidence shows it to be patently false. Furthermore, in order for HI to hold onto the original anti-suburban interpretation HI has to actively deny that the interpretation consonant with the author's pronouncements of intent is correct. This would seem a very curious position given that both interpretations seemed to be plausible prior to the statements of intent from the artist. In light of these pronouncements from

Yates it becomes somewhat arbitrary to leave out some publicly available, yet epistemologically relevant evidence for HI's preferred interpretation.

On the other hand, HI might argue that now this interview has been published it is part of the publicly available body of information and so HI can logically reach the same conclusion as MAI. However, this creates a different problem. Hypothetically we can conceive of a case where a hypothetical intentionalist, *person A*, has access to some private statements of intent made by the artist and those statements are not in the public domain and, were they to be admissible, would clearly change our perception of the work. *Person A* cannot include knowledge of those statements in an interpretation of the creative work. Later these statements are published or made public and now these statements are admissible for *Person A* to include in their body of epistemically relevant information. In both cases *Person A* had access to the same information but their interpretation was different because, in the first instance, *Person A* would not allow themselves to include the private statements made by the artist. In this case *Person A*'s decision to exclude information she already has at one juncture but include it at another seems arbitrary and irrational.

A final concern with this case study might lie with the distinction between semantic and categorial intentions. To quote Jerrold Levinson, "an author's intention to mean something in or by a text T (a semantic intention) is one thing, while an author's intention that T be classified, taken, approached in some specific or general way (categorial intention) is quite another" (Levinson 1992, p.232). This distinction is relevant because HIs tend to be more liberal when it comes to categorial intentions in that they allow much more room for direct authorial statements in interpreting the categorial intentions – that is, how the artist has intended the work to be taken as a whole. In fact, Yates's intentions revealed in the interviews with regard to *Revolutionary Road* seem to largely concern precisely categorial intentions, in the sense that they show how the work should be classified or approached in a general way. If this is indeed the case, then HI could respond that we are able to give Yates's statements about his categorial intentions the kind of role I have previously argued is not within reach of HI.

However, the distinction between semantic intentions and categorical intentions is not so clear in this case. There are specific references in this same interview with Yates to his semantic intentions in the text. For instance, the interviewer suggests that the title is an attack on suburban life, to which Yates replies "I meant the title to suggest that the revolutionary road of 1776 had come to something very much like a dead end in the fifties" (Clark 2011, p.8). This would be a case of mixed intention without two significantly distinct aims (Livingston 1998, p.842). Here HI has to establish whether the semantic portion cancels out the intention and

there does not seem to be a clear basis for making this decision. This would lead to an ambiguous interpretation of the novel, which would not be satisfactory for either camp, since HI would be conceding that the ambiguity was in some sense intentional and so the interpretations of HI and MAI would not converge. Furthermore, categorical intentions are usually more concerned with the status of the work as say a novel or a short story, where this doesn't seem to be a concern here.

3.5 Conclusion

When we are faced with a number of possible interpretations for a given work, the pronouncements of intention from the author are often a defining factor in establishing which interpretation is legitimate, except in cases where the artist's pronouncements of intent are not sufficiently supported by the content of the work. In both the cases I have explored, the artist's pronouncements of intent do seem to be supported by the content of the work. I believe that both the contemporary visual art of Matt Sharp and the novel *Revolutionary Road* by Richard Yates offer defining examples in defence of MAI. With regards to the former, Sharp's testimony is crucial to understanding the process of art making and which features of the work can be interpreted as intentional. Where the latter is concerned, I have outlined two possible interpretations of the *Revolutionary Road* and shown that in the absence of Yates's own direct pronouncements of intent we could easily conclude, as many did, that the book was an anti-suburban and an anti-marriage novel. Attending to the content of the work, the publicly available biographical information and other context such as other works in his oeuvre, we might reasonably conclude that Yates meant for *Revolutionary Road* to be interpreted as an attack on 1950's suburban America. However, in light of Yates's later clarificatory remarks we can now see that Yates never meant this and it seems odd to hold on to this interpretation in light of the new evidence, (provided we agree that the fundamental norm and goal of interpretation is to recover intended meaning). Yates clearly wanted to focus on Frank who was an unremarkable man who blamed their suburban existence for his shortcomings. In the case studies I have discussed, the pronouncements made by the artists are sufficiently supported by the content of their respective works and the publicly available evidence. Given this information and the reasonable suggestion that we are not generally mistaken about our intentions, we should acknowledge that there are at least some cases where these pronouncements of intention are relevant considerations in aesthetic interpretation.

4. Mistaking Intentions

The first three chapters have been devoted to establishing the connection between the intention of the artist and the interpretation of their work. In Chapter One I explored popular accounts of intention and outlined how various arguments in the debate have been predicated upon poorly defined terminology. In Chapter Two I argued for a distinction between three types of meaning found in works of art; natural meaning, non-natural meaning and unconscious meaning. In particular I argued that an artist might not always be aware of the beliefs that motivate their intentional actions and that these constitute instances of unconscious intentional action. In Chapter Three I outlined the debate between hypothetical intentionalism and moderate actual intentionalism and I offered two case studies which I believe lend weight to the moderate actual intentionalist position. I used the art of Matt Sharp to debunk HI and Richard Yates's novel *Revolutionary Road* to demonstrate the importance of the pronouncements of intent made by the artist in forming an accurate interpretation of their work. However, conclusions drawn so far leave one important question unanswered: what do we do when the pronouncements of intent made by the artist appear to conflict with the unconscious intentions found in their work?

In each case we must establish whether or not the unconscious intentions drawn out of the work and the relevant contextual information, provide a more persuasive explanation of the work's meaning than the stated intentions of the artist. Here we might not be disregarding the intentions of the artist so much as favouring "one criterion of intention against another" (Cioffi 1963, p.97). In order to understand how and why we might give preference to one criterion of intention over another we must first discuss the possible scenarios in which such a problem might arise. For this I will consult the work of Frank Cioffi (1963) in which he explores various cases where we might prioritise an unconscious intention we attribute to an artist, over the stated intention given by the artist. I will then address my own case study, presented in Chapter Two, which focuses on the character Apu from television show *The Simpsons*. I will argue that Apu has inherently racist connotations and these are relevant to the way we interpret his character in the show. In order to do this, I will first have to give an account of what constitutes racist humour, therefore section 4.2 is dedicated to a detailed breakdown of both racism and racist humour. Having established appropriate definitions, I will show that the writing of Apu definitely falls into the category of racist humour. I will argue that the way this character has been written into the show is an example of unconscious racism, which takes the form of implicit bias and stereotyping. I present evidence for this claim and I show that it contradicts Groening's own pronouncements of intent. This is an occasion where we may legitimately give preference to one criterion of intention over another. I do not believe that the pronouncements

of intent made by the writer are insincere but rather that Matt Groening is unaware of the implicit bias he holds and that these biases affected his writing at the time of composition.

4.1 Misinterpretation of Meaning

William Butler Yeats composed what is considered to be one of his best poems after visiting a progressive convent school in 1926. The poem, entitled *Among School Children*, brings together a guided tour of the school and the philosophical reflections of an old man. The third line of verse six reads, "Solider Aristotle played the taws". Some versions of this poem reprinted later have the word "soldier" in place of the first word "solider" but this is an editing mistake where the letters were mixed up by accident. The mistake went unnoticed mainly because the words are so similar but also because by sheer coincidence the alternative spelling made sense in context. Hall also makes the point that since several versions of the poem were printed with this mistake while Yeats was still alive, he "may have decided he could live with" it (Hall 1995, p.40). However, American poet and writer Delmore Schwartz said he felt "helpless to determine whether it was or was not a misprint" (Bowers 2009, p.27). In one of his subsequent interpretations he endorsed the idea that Aristotle was actually a soldier, based on the myth that Aristotle followed Alexander the Great on his voyage to India, where other accounts argue that he tried to dissuade Alexander from his conquest out of respect for Indian culture or for fear of what they might find. Since other lines in the poem depict Plato as a philosopher with lofty ideas and Aristotle has earned the reputation as a grounded foot soldier, Schwartz's interpretation is not beyond the realms of the possible and actually fits quite neatly with the other verses. However, since we know that the spelling was a mistake, we should surely dismiss Schwartz's army interpretation as unsound.

Here it could be argued that what is under discussion is the divergence between what Yeats wrote and how Delmore Schwartz understood the text, as opposed to what Yeats meant and how we should understand it. To see whether or not this distinction can be validated we might consider situations where words may sound the same but take on more than one meaning or spelling. In these situations, the only disparity between what the author wrote and our misunderstanding of it would be what she meant to say. In Chapter Three I explored the poem *Henry Purcell*, previously examined by Gary Iseminger (1992). We recall that Iseminger offers two possible interpretations of one particular verse and argues that in cases where two plausible interpretations present themselves we should side with the interpretation consonant with the artist's intentions. Iseminger goes on to cite a note from the poet, which suggests Hopkins' use of "fair fall" in the poem is a rephrasing of "fair (fortune be) fall". Hopkins acknowledges that his choice of a proper adjective 'fair' might modify the sentence to mean something different,

but he did not intend the poem to be read in this way. It could be argued that the alternate meaning noted by Hopkins is no more defensible than the meaning found in Yeats where Aristotle is a soldier.

As I have already argued in the previous chapter, there are certainly occasions where an artist's stated intentions with respect to their works are a relevant and persuasive criterion for interpretation. However, there are also cases where the pronouncements of intention by the artist are not so convincing. For this I do not have in mind the obvious cases where an artist's statement is obviously disingenuous. Carroll (2001) has argued that in these instances we should discount the pronouncements of intention from the artist, not because we think that authorial intentions are irrelevant, but because we think that the report is insincere. Instead, I am referring to cases where the artist is not fully aware of the beliefs or motivations that inform her intentions. Cioffi has described this as "favouring one criterion of intention as against another" (Cioffi 1963, p.97). If we find an inconsistency between the pronouncements of intention by the artist and the interpretation from the audience, we should not hastily conclude that the work has adopted a meaning independent of what the author intended. Rather we are choosing a different criterion of intention with which to interpret the work.

Asked to choose between the possibility that a work had taken on a particular meaning by accident and the possibility that the artist had made a mistake in the interpretation of their work we might sensibly opt for the latter. At this point one might argue that an artist could not be mistaken as to their intentions because, as Anscombe (1967) reminds us, a key criterion of intentional action is that we are aware of our intentions without observation and that actions make sense from the point of view of the agent who performs them. In reply, it is important to reiterate that I do not agree with Anscombe on this point in every case, because whilst an agent may be aware of the intentional action they are undertaking they may not always be aware of the true unconscious beliefs that motivate them in acting. This is a key characteristic that separates unconscious intentions from conscious intentions. The artist might have a perfectly plausible reason-based explanation for their action but it is not as convincing as the reasons provided by the unconscious hypothesis. In these cases the work and the relevant contextual information will be considered more persuasive evidence for an alternative theory than her direct pronouncements of intention. It is not that we immediately disregard the private statements of intent by the artist before even consulting them – this would bring us back to hypothetical intentionalism. Indeed the statements of intent themselves can be quite revealing especially where we are searching for instances of unconscious bias. Instead we are saying that appealing to the unconscious meanings found in the work might, on occasion, provide a more plausible interpretation.

Cioffi cites Edmund Wilson's interpretation of Henry James as an example of this. *The Turn of the Screw* is an 1898 horror novella written by James and was thought to be a ghost story before Wilson formulated an alternative view. Wilson argued that the ghosts were phantoms of the unnamed narrator's mind and the work itself was just a dated study of spinsterhood (Cioffi 1963). Oliver Elton (1907) shared this view casting doubt as to whether the ghosts who seem to select when and where they appear, are real or whether they are hallucination of the unnamed narrator. Wilson suspected that the text had been carefully crafted so as to leave open the possibility that the ghosts were imaginary and he cited sexual repression as a possible cause of these hallucinations (Slide 2013). He also argued that some passages in the preface to the book corroborated his theory. Later some notebooks belonging to James (Wilson 2006) were published suggesting that James had intended to produce a ghost story and Wilson was forced to retract his interpretation.

> Saturday, January 12th 1895. Note here the ghost-story told me at Addington (evening of Thursday 10th) by the Archbishop of Canterbury: the mere vague, undetailed, faint sketch of it – being all he had been told (very badly and imperfectly), by a lady who had no art of relation, and no clearness: the story of the young children (indefinite number and age) left to the care of the servants in an old country-house, through the death, presumably, of the parents. The servants, wicked and depraved, corrupt and deprave the children, the children are bad, full of evil, to a sinister degree. The servants die […] and their apparitions, figures, return to haunt the house and children, to whom they seem to beckon, whome they invite and solicit, from across dangerous places, the deep ditch of a sunk fence, etc. – so that the children may destroy themselves by responding, by getting into them, they are not lost: but they try and try and try, these evil presences, to get hold of them. (James 1987, p.109)

Later however, Wilson revisited his initial Freudian reading of Henry James when John Smith pointed out clues in the text that suggest the ghost appearance was not supernatural (Smith 1957). Cioffi (1963) and Tanney (2008) refer to this as a case of "the colour [flowing] back" (Cioffi 1963, p.98) where the work itself provides more powerful evidence than the pronouncements of the artist. Instead of simply siding with the pronouncements of intent by the author, Wilson argues that particular biographical and contextual information surrounding Henry James at the time of composition point to a case of sexual repression. As a consequence of this repression Wilson believed that James is suffering from a kind of self-deception.

> [I]n The Turn of the Screw, not merely is the governess self-deceived, but that James is self-deceived about her. The doubt that some readers feel as to the soundness of the governess' story are the reflection of doubts communicated unconsciously by James himself. (Wilson 1948, p.583)

Cioffi argues that this is an example of a biographical reference in literature. The fact that the governess's story is lacking in a sense makes us realise what was always there (Cioffi 1963). The suggestion made by Wilson is that James was deceiving himself about his intentions, in the sense that he misunderstood the beliefs that motivated them, so that this meaning found in his work is not an accidental feature of it but rather an unconscious intention buried within the text (Gribble 1983).

Cioffi acknowledges that there is considerable resistance to this kind of theory because it is "only a step to the production of phantasy-theses like Wimsatt's and Beardsley's" (Cioffi 1963, p.106). Cioffi is still discussing intentional features of the work, even if they are unconscious whereas Wimsatt and Beardsley oppose any such reference. Additionally, in Chapter Two I explored the resistance to these Freudian and Marxist derived hermeneutical approaches. Cioffi is referring to the delicate distinction between a biographical fact about the artist and a critical comment on the work.

> A reader's response to a work will vary with what he knows; one of the things which he knows and with which his responses will vary is what the author had in mind, or what he intended. The distinction between what different people know of an author before reading his work and what the same person knows of successive occasions can't be a logical one. When is a remark a critical remark about the poem and when a biographical one about the author? The difficulty in obeying the injunction to ignore the biographical facts and cultivate the critical ones is that you can't know which is which until after you have read the work in light of them. (Cioffi 1963, p.95-96)

Painting, writing, sculpting works of art are immensely complex and intricate activities and, as we have discussed, these works partly take their meaning from a reason-based explanation for their composition. The problems that Cioffi faces in his analysis are no different from the problems faced in the interpretation of action and conversation more generally (Tanney 2008). Whilst it is quite normal to assume that people intend what they do (Anscombe 1967), say what they mean and that their pronouncements of intention with regard to their actions will accord with the interpretation we give them (Tanney 2008), we must also acknowledge that there are

cases where we have unconscious intentions and give meaning to our actions in ways of which we were not aware.

4.2 Racist Humour

Before returning to my own example from Chapter Two we must explore the exact nature of racist humour. In the case of Apu from *The Simpsons*, my interpretation of the writer's motivation contradicts his own statements of intent. I do not argue that his statements are insincere, rather that he is not aware of certain implicit biases that influenced him while writing the character. It is my belief that the character Apu is a clear case of implicit bias and in an attempt to be humorous Groening has engaged in a form of unconscious racism prevalent within western culture. If I am to demonstrate this kind of humour is indeed racist and speaks directly to the meaning of the work, then I must first outline exactly what constitutes racist humour. Following that I will reiterate the case study from Chapter Two and show how we can favour one criterion of intention over another when assessing the unconscious meanings found in Matt Groening's work. Groening himself dismisses any suggestion that the character Apu has racist connotations, but that is not necessarily indicative of disingenuousness or deceit, rather an example of implicit bias at work in the mind of the artist. In this case we have considerable evidence to argue that the beliefs that motivated his intentional actions in the work are other than those he claims and realises.

There is a body of work dedicated to analysing comedy and humour in philosophy but rarely has it been analysed along with cases of racism or indeed any other kind of prejudice for that matter. The case of Apu clearly warrants discussion of both these elements in conjunction. This section is split into three parts. In section 4.3 I will map out the philosophical terrain and look at various theories of racist humour. Then in I will suggest some possible problems for these theories. I will look at definitions proposed by various philosophers surrounding racism, humour and stereotyping that will be relevant to this discussion. Finally, I will address concerns that Anderson (2015) has expressed about the somewhat binary nature of the debate. Anderson argues that there is a difference between a racist joke and a racially sensitive joke, he feels that sometimes there is a tendency to conflate humour that is genuinely racist with humour that might have racial overtones. Whilst I think Anderson's insight is valuable and the discussion could certainly benefit from this type of moderation, the language he uses is perhaps a little ambiguous to make his point clear and convincing. Nevertheless, I endorse Anderson's definition of racist humour, broadly speaking, with an added caveat.

4.3 Theories of Racist Humour

Humour, more generally, describes the proclivity of certain experiences and actions to provoke amusement in an individual or audience. Lots of activities can be humorous but in this thesis we are obviously more concerned with humour conveyed through art and literature. There are various theories of humour, for instance the Incongruity theory outlined by Kant (1790) in his *Critique of Judgement*, the Superiority theory expounded by Thomas Hobbes (1651) and finally Relief theories, which are most commonly associated with Freud. These are often presented as rival theories but Levinson (1998) points out that it is not clear whether the proponents meant them to be complete theories incompatible with any other. There are also more modern theories of humour such as Carroll (2005) and Provine (2000) who focus on the difference between humour and laughter. These philosophers have argued that laughter is a bodily state that causes particular vocal responses, whereas humour is a cognitive activity, which is a response to some stimulant. In contrast, Shaw (2010) questions whether this distinction can be legitimately made. He suggests there is a bias in the literature surrounding humour toward cognitivist theories of emotion, which can render the definition of humour unclear in some cases. Shaw says these cognitivist theories are similar to cognitivist theories of emotion, where the amusement derives from our assessment that something is incongruous. However, he says that there are clearly cases of humour that do not follow this model, for instance, one can imagine humour without laughter. Shaw acknowledges that these cases might not completely refute the cognitivist theories, but he suggests that "these cases are better explained by a perceptual theory of emotion that associates emotion with internally registering that one is experiencing certain bodily states" (Shaw 2010, p.120).

Shaw argues that the three competing theories of humour represented in the philosophical literature, namely the Relief theory, the Superiority theory and the Incongruity theory, are all three inadequate but accepts that the Incongruity theory is most widely held in the literature.

> The incongruity theory claims, then, that when one perceives something to be humorous one perceives it to be incongruous in some way and that one relates to this incongruity as a source of amusement rather than anxiety or as requiring problem solving. (Shaw 2010, p.116)

Shaw objects that we might find something funny even though it is predictable where the incongruity theory seems to demand by definition a sense of unexpectedness. Equally Shaw fears that this theory cannot account for the fact that jokes are often still funny after the second or third reiteration. Despite his reservations, as we have already mentioned, this theory does

seem to have consensus in the literature so Shaw focuses on "this version when presenting [his] arguments" (Shaw 2010, p.119). His goal is not to offer a specific critique of Incongruity theories in order to demonstrate their inadequacy, but rather to "question the more general tendency to equate humour with cognitive activities that are generally distinguishable from the bodily states that occur when we laugh" (Shaw 2010, p.120). He argues that it is not necessarily the case that we should treat humour as a cognitive activity citing the example that babies can find things funny without the necessary cognitive capacities discussed in the Incongruity theory. However, I have to agree in this instance with LaFollette and Shanks (1993) who say that the baby is not experiencing humour in this case, only laughter. Shaw tries to resist this argument by invoking Occam's Razor, arguing that it requires a plurality of explanations for the same phenomena. The child laughs in the same way that the adult laughs at slapstick comedy. He claims that if children are simply reacting to what they see but the adult is appreciating humour and the child is not then we must set up a complex explanation to distinguish the two instances of laughing. However, as Caspar Addyman (2020) recently found in his research, the reason babies laugh in this case is simply to do with pleasure and they seem to use laughing as a means of basic communication, which lets adults know they want something to continue. A complete account of humour is not required here, so I will endorse the Incongruity account for the purposes of this thesis. Shaw's criticisms are interesting but not sufficiently damning to set aside this widely held view.

There are also many competing theories about what constitutes racism. The definition of prejudicial speech acts has returned to the spotlight in recent times largely in the wake of the Black Lives Matter movement, Bill C-16 in Canada and right-wing populist movements which are particularly prevalent in contemporary American culture. Philosophers such as Garcia (1999) have argued that comments by individuals or groups should be interpreted as racist based on the intentions that lie behind them. Appiah (1990) argues it is the beliefs of the agent that are the defining factor whereas others refer to an ideological problem (Mills 2003). Alternatively, there are structural theories, which posit institutional explanations for the interpretation of racism (Ture and Hamilton 1992). There is also an ethical dimension to be explored within the context of interpretation, for instance, whether we should consider racism to be a shortcoming or failing in a joke. Gaut (1998) has argued that that when an agent uses racist language in a joke it is no longer funny. However, there are many individuals who find these sorts of jokes hilarious, which shows that Gaut is giving a conception of humour from his point of view. It certainly reflects poorly on the person who finds said jokes funny, but Gaut cannot deny that there are those people who find them amusing and their response is directed towards something they consider to be funny. In response to this, Cohen (1999) has argued that moral shortcomings or failings have no bearing on whether or not a comment is humorous.

He argues that even if a joke is in poor taste that does not exclude the possibility that it is also funny for the listener.

> Wish that there were no mean jokes. Try remaking the world so that such jokes will have no place, will not arise. But do not deny that they are funny. That denial is a pretence that will help nothing. (Cohen 1999, p.84)

Whether or not racist jokes are funny is an issue not directly relevant for the matter under consideration so a complete exposition of this particular discussion is not necessary.

Anderson (2015) has drawn a distinction between what he sees as racial humour and racist humour. For Anderson racial humour can be anything that uses race in its content. In contrast, racist humour "violates norms concerning the treatment of people based on their perceived race" (Anderson 2015, p.502). A lot of racist humour is based on, or resorts to, stereotyping, which is also difficult to define. The Dorling Kindersley Oxford English Dictionary (1998, p.816) defines stereotype as "*noun*. […] a person or thing that conforms to an unjustifiably fixed mental picture, b. such an impression or attitude." This definition is limiting though, for instance, expressions can be stereotypical without requiring the accompaniment of a mental picture. Since it seems to be such a central theme to both racism and comedy it is worth also establishing what a stereotype is, especially if it is to feature in our discussions about racism.

Blum defines stereotypes as "false or misleading generalisations about groups held in a manner that renders them largely, though not entirely, immune to counterevidence" (Blum 2004, p.251). Psychologists such as Fiske and Taylor define stereotypes as schemas. Schemas are patterns of repeated behaviour and cognitive structures which "represent knowledge about a concept or type of stimulus, including its attributes and the relations among attributes" (Fiske and Taylor 1991, p.98). They suggest that stereotyping is a default judgement people use when they do not have the time or the motivation to understand people as individuals. This definition suggests that stereotypes refer to information about groups and what the members of those groups should be like. Smith and DeCoster (2000) put forward another possible view, one that defines stereotypes as associations in memory. Smith and DeCoster argue that the memory retains information about our surroundings by associating information with images of objects, names or sounds. These associations account for our perceptions of familiar people and environments. Smith and DeCoster would have us understand stereotypes in these terms as associations in the mind between certain information and particular social groups. These associations do not have to be expressed in terms of explicit propositions, rather they can remain largely generic unless challenged. Kang (2009) has a similar view and with a slightly more

amoral approach he argues that stereotypes are simply characteristics we associate with groups of people.

Irrespective of which definition you prefer it is clear that stereotypes seem to be relevant to both the agent who articulates them and the audience who are affected by them. Beeghly (2015) suggests that we do not have to choose between associations and schemas if we opt for the descriptive view of stereotypes instead.

> Stereotypes play a special role in categorising individuals and forming expectations about them. We can think of them either as concepts of social groups or as psychological items necessary for the formation and the use of such concepts. Were we to express the content of our stereotypes, we would typically describe them in generic terms. (Beeghly 2015, p.680)

There are other contemporary theories which argue in a similar way that stereotypes should be defined as correct or incorrect connections between individuals and attributes. These theories nearly all claim that associations are made as a consequence of the generally perceived notion that individuals are members of a certain group. This general definition has also been expressed by Hilton and Von Hippel (1996) who argue that stereotypes "associate members of certain social groups more strongly than others with particular attributes, in virtue of their perceived social group membership" (Puddifoot 2017, p.139).

The purpose of this section was not to determine specific definitions for each of these words, or indeed solve all the problems that arise from them. Each definition might warrant a dedicated paper and I do not have space in this chapter to elaborate on all of them. Instead the purpose was to outline the scope of the literature on this subject and highlight some of the issues that make it so contentious. I endorse the descriptive view of stereotyping for the purposes of my argument and to broaden the context for our discussions about racist humour.

Raul Perez (2016) has detailed a fascinating history of racist humour, focusing particularly on both its current and historical functions in America. He investigates the role of humour in promoting pro-slavery ideology and then looks at how the use of racist humour was challenged by the civil rights movement. Furthermore, he offers various avenues for further investigation suggesting that racist humour is still a very present danger in our society today despite what we might believe. Interestingly though Cohen (1999) has argued that an account of racist humour is difficult to formulate, let alone objectively establish in history. Consider a racist joke such as "what do you call an honest Asian businessman? Asif." Cohen has questioned whether an

objection to jokes of this kind is a question of individual taste rather than an ethical statement. He argues that in order to castigate this joke on ethical grounds someone would have to put forward a comprehensive moral theory and demonstrate that this joke contravened its normative principles. If legitimate reasons grounded in an objective ethical theory cannot be offered as to why the joke is immoral then we are restricted to saying it is in poor taste. He concedes that there are definitely some jokes which make him "uneasy [like] the idea that black men are criminals and mindless basketball players" (Cohen 1999, p.79) but he says that it is almost impossible to arrive at a formula that will help identify jokes that are outside the bounds of acceptability. Cohen tries to deal with this problem initially by saying that if these kinds of stereotypes are to be believed then they might lead to the poor treatment of black people across the world. Furthermore, Cohen argues that the "existence of such jokes and commerce in them are symptoms of pernicious attitudes and beliefs" (Cohen 1999, p.79)

Broadly speaking I agree with Cohen and I have some sympathy with his view that it is difficult to ground racist humour in objective moral fact. However, I think there are essentially two responses to his theory worth discussing at this point. The first is to throw down the gauntlet and try to establish grounds on which racism is definitively wrong. If we can show that racism is wrong then it follows that racist humour is also wrong and Cohen's fears should subside. Blum has argued that racism is wrong because it violates our normative understanding of what constitutes respect and it is inexorably linked to "race-based oppressive" ideologies such as apartheid, imperialism, slavery and National Socialism (Blum 2002, p.27). In contrast Rawls has argued that social injustice is the defining factor that renders racism morally wrong. For Rawls, racism violates one of two basic principles either 1) Equal Liberty, which is the principle that basic freedoms should be equally distributed and 2) the difference principle, which states that the people who find themselves in the most dire and impoverished situations should be better off than they would be under any other distributive system (Rawls 1971). For Rawls a racist act is one that violates either of these principles. Rawls asks us to imagine a society where the members are shrouded in a veil of ignorance. In this society people do not know what positions they will take in the society later on or how their interactions with people of other races will affect said positions. Rawls points out that in such a society racism or any other form of discrimination is irrational because there is no reason to engage with these divisive ideas. I think either of these theories would do to satisfy Cohen's requirements.

The second response is to express concern that for racist jokes to be funny they seem to need to be grounded in beliefs or common conceptions about a particular topic or racial group. Take for example jokes about Jewish people and corruption, it is not clear that one would find these jokes amusing unless the person who is amused subscribe to those beliefs in some way.

Regardless of whether or not the beliefs are predicated on truth, someone would have to believe it to be true or have knowledge of the underlying premise in order to find it amusing, else the premise of the joke collapses. If this is the case then Cohen has underestimated the connection between the level of amusement and the potential for cultural harm.

Having raised the issue, Cohen has actually neglected to investigate what I believe to be the most persuasive argument with regards to the problems formulating an account of racist humour. Much of comedy by its very nature explores inappropriate topics through irony in particular. When stand-up comedians make jokes about stereotypes or invoke particular prejudices, there is a sense in which they are addressing the topics indirectly and because of the context we are often able to laugh rather than be offended. For instance, the character Al Murray, brainchild of Alastair James Hay Murray, is an ironic depiction of a pub landlord who suffers from all the prejudices of twentieth century working class Britain. Murray's character is sexist, homophobic, racist and he hates the French. He is filled with nostalgia for yesteryear and longs for the return of the British Empire. Confronted with the pub landlord in real life most people would be horrified by his views, but Murray's character is deliberately mocking this stereotype espousing terrible arguments and ridiculous epithets. He is deliberately crude and overly simplistic with his analysis of other countries in an effort to demonstrate how the uneducated working class form bizarre delusions of grandeur about their own superiority over other cultures. He is not always successful in conveying this irony and it does seem to be lost on many of the audience who arrive anticipating a seminar as opposed to a stand-up routine. Equally, of course, other people will be offended but almost anything can cause offence, the level of offence is not necessarily indicative of the actual objective moral interpretation of the content in the work. The point is, that Murray is espousing prejudicial remarks in an effort to mock those people who espouse prejudicial remarks, therefore it is an impersonation sketch. However, there are of course still instances where these kinds of comments are not deployed ironically and this *would* constitute legitimate racist humour.

If these problems cannot be overcome we must explore other theories to Cohen's. Philips (1984) offers another account of racism and racist humour. The central point he makes is that racism is used in its "primary sense when it is attributed to actions. All other uses of [racism] […] must be understood directly or indirectly in relation to this one" (Philips 1984, p.77). Philips argues that racist beliefs are used to justify racist acts and prejudicial emotions give rise to said actions as well. For Philips a racist act is either when person A does something in order to harm person B, because B is a member of a particular race or ethnic group, or, regardless of person A's intentions, her action can be expected to "mistreat" (Philips 1984, p.77) person B as a consequence of their membership to a particular race or ethnic group. Philips uses the

word “mistreat” deliberately because he does not believe that the word “harm” has sufficient scope to include immoral damage to a person’s interests. Additionally, while some philosophers such as Alcoff (2006) have argued that there is a difference between ethnicity and race, here the word “ethnic” can easily be substituted for the word “race” and none of the meaning is lost in his claim. Sweeping aside the usual ways we define racism, he says, “the point of the moral category racist […] is to allow us to identify and to condemn certain pervasive forms of mistreatment” (Phillips 1984, p.80).

Whilst I think Phillips’ ethical stance is admirable I have some serious concerns about both the validity and soundness of his arguments. Beginning with the definition itself there seem to be a number of counterexamples, which cause Philips significant theoretical problems. Consider a case where a man decides not to attend the birthday of a black person because he does not like being around black people. Most people would agree that this would count as an example of a racist act but it does not seem to have any bearing on the mistreatment of black people. Therefore, for Philips, this act would not be considered racist. Conversely, suppose that a psychologist was conducting a social experiment and finds evidence to suggest that black people are more violent than white people. What is not clear from the results is whether these violent tendencies are inherent and biological or whether they are the result of sociological factors. The psychologist is not a racist and has no particular agenda but she is aware that if they publish the results it could lead to higher rates of racial discrimination against black people. Despite this risk she decides that the results were achieved as part of a legitimate scientific study and may well contribute to the broader debate about nature and nurture. Again, on Philips’s definition this would constitute a racist act because we can reasonably expect that publishing the results will lead to a mistreatment of black people, but this does not intuitively seem to be racist at all.

Philips distinguishes his from two other views in order to demonstrate that his is a better theory. These views are the Agent-centred view and the Belief-centred view. The Agent-centred view claims that racism hinges upon the beliefs and motivations of the agent enacting them and the Belief-centred view says, “racist acts are [those] which presuppose racist beliefs for their justifications. On this view, to say that [an act] is racist is to say that A is justified if and only if certain racist beliefs are true” (Philips 1984, p.82-83). These views are not widely represented in the academic literature, rather they are views that Philips deems to be popular consensus on the matter. Fundamentally, the difference between Philips’s position and the two outlined above, is that Philips’s view requires us to consider the mistreatment of racial groups as a necessary condition in the definition of racism and racist humour.

Philips makes it clear that he is not trying to build a watertight definition of racism but rather target those people who do treat members of other ethnic groups unfairly but then go on to justify or rationalise their actions on the basis that they are acting sensibly. For instance, imagine a person who does not invite his black acquaintances to a party on the grounds that it might make his other friends uncomfortable, or the father who is reluctant to let his daughter date a black man. The father justifies this decision on a statistical basis that black people are, he says, more likely to commit crime so he is just trying to protect her and he claims he harbours no ill-feeling towards the members of this ethnic group.

> On the Agent-centred theory, if these are in fact their motives, they needn't think of their actions as racist, and they needn't think of themselves as complicit in a racist system. Indeed, this system permits them to feel morally superior to those who discriminate out of feeling or conviction. (Philips 1984, p.79)

Bergmann (1986) defends one of these agent-centred views of prejudicial behaviour to which Philips refers in his paper. She is more concerned with sexism than racism, but her arguments can be carried over and made relevant to these discussions. First Bergmann sets up an account of humour arguing that humour arises from any "situations, objects, words, statements and stories – that are funny" (Bergman 1986, p.65), where funniness is defined in terms of incongruity. We have already discussed this idea but each proponent of incongruity theory explains it slightly differently. Bergmann's own definition is that "an account or element of an episode is incongruous if it is contraindicated by our beliefs, attitudes, and/or norms" (Bergmann 1986, p.66). Extending this definition further, she argues that sexist humour is "humour in which sexist beliefs, attitudes, and/or norms either must be held in order to perceive an incongruity or are used to add to the fun effect of the incongruity" (Bergmann 1986, p.70). For Bergmann it isn't so much the belief itself that renders a certain behaviour sexist, rather the function it serves in humour making. The idea here is that racism is manifest in the belief and moreover in the function to which the belief is put – creating humour. If we apply this logic to racist humour then we might say that a racist must hold certain beliefs or attitudes that explain their prejudicial behaviour. More specifically these beliefs or attitudes act as reason-based answers to the 'Why?' question (Anscombe 1967).

One objection to Bergmann might be that her claims are too strong. In other words if knowing about beliefs and attitudes means holding them then she might have drawn too broad a definition of racist humour. For instance, someone could find a racist joke amusing without endorsing racist behaviour (Anderson 2015) or holding racist beliefs themselves. The challenge for Bergmann is to separate being aware of racist beliefs and actually having racist beliefs and

attitudes. She pre-empts this objection by saying that simply being aware of what makes a joke funny is not sufficient reason to be amused by it and argues that anyone who finds it funny must hold racist beliefs at least to some extent. Anderson is unconvinced by this response pointing out that there are many aspects of a joke that could be found amusing, such as the way it is told or the unusual characters and setting. It is important here to separate the aspects of the joke that are relevant to racism from those which are not. Someone might laugh at a joke because of the voice in which it was told or because the joke teller was wearing an amusing costume, but these would be examples of disinterested appreciation. I would argue that the person laughing here is not attending to the contents of the joke but rather at some superfluous detail. One could laugh at these details and not even hear the joke, but then it is not the joke they are finding funny. Anderson would respond to me here by arguing that there are also things which are aspects of the joke, which are directly connected to the content such as the impersonations of characters. Another concern for Bergmann is that someone can find a joke funny because they understand why it is supposed to be funny and realising the connections they were supposed to make gives them a sense of amusement and still relates directly to the content of the joke.

It is important to note at this point that a person can espouse racist or sexist comments without having a concept of racism or sexism at all. Although unlikely, a person could hypothetically not be aware of the word "racism" or have any concept of the term and still be capable of making racist remarks and holding racist beliefs. The prejudicial behaviour violates certain behavioural standards and the agent who violates them must hold certain beliefs or attitudes, such as a particular disdain for people of a different race, but the theory doesn't require people to have a specific concept of racism or be aware of their behaviour as racist. This is important because it demonstrates how someone can hold racist views or undertake racist actions without realising they are racist. To her credit Bergmann's theory does not violate this principle, because her theory does not seem to require that people understand the prejudice of sexism in order to be able to hold sexist beliefs.

4.4 Non-binary Views

Blum (2002) argues that these conceptions are too narrow, offering only a binary position on whether an act is racist or not. This binary position demands that we sort every joke into one of two categories: racist or not racist. However, it is not always clear whether a joke fits neatly into one or other. Our example from earlier might highlight this problem, "what do you call an honest Asian businessman? Asif." Suppose for a moment it was an Asian comic telling this joke. In this case it would be difficult to class the joke as racist because of the speaker's

ethnicity. Similarly, consider the example of Al Murray from earlier, it wouldn't make sense to brand someone a racist for telling jokes or mimicking racists in an attempt to mock their beliefs. Furthermore, members of the black community use the N-word to refer to one another and for them it does not have the same connotations as when a white person uses it. However, there are those who disagree on the grounds that a joke can be racist simply because it helps to perpetuate and spread harmful stereotypes, and so wrongly harms others, irrespective of whether the teller belongs to the target group. Blum has argued that we should adopt a broader vocabulary when talking about racist humour. Rather than just being racist or not, a joke could be "racially insensitive" (Anderson 2015, p.5), which means it might have racial connotations or rely on racial stereotypes to make it funny, but it is not necessarily as direct as full blown racism. This does not necessarily help in the case of Al Murray because Murray is attacking working class white British people for their prejudicial and imperialist sentiments, but it will be relevant elsewhere. There is a range of racial humour and it varies in in terms of moral acceptability, but sketching out the exact scope of this range is another task beyond the remit of this chapter.

As has already been suggested, Anderson (2015) has argued for a slightly subtler and refined position, which consists in establishing a more moderate category of "racially insensitive" (Anderson 2015, p.506) material, which sits between the binary racist and non-racist categories.

> On this view, an instance of racial stereotype humor is merely racial just in case (i) the speaker has an aim to subvert the stereotype associated with the target group and (ii) the audience can reasonably be expected to recognize this aim. A racial joke is racially insensitive if the speaker (i) lacks an aim to subvert the associated stereotype or (ii) has a subverting aim but cannot reasonably expect audience uptake of that aim. And finally, racial humor is racist if either (i) it wrongly harms the target in virtue of that person's membership in a particular racial group or (ii) the speaker is motivated by a malevolent attitude or one of disregard. (Anderson 2015, p.506)

Broadly speaking this makes sense and seems relatively comprehensive although I have some concerns with the wording in places. For instance, whether or not a speaker "lacks an aim" could potentially be difficult to prove, especially with the subtleties of some humour. However, it could be argued that this in itself is not a problem for it might be equally difficult to determine whether someone is racist or not. Additionally, Anderson does not make clear exactly what manner of sin is covered by the word "harm". For instance, there is clearly a difference between harm and offence, since you might have harm without offence and vice versa. However, people

might not be harmed either physically or emotionally by racist behaviour, either because they have become accustomed to it or because they are particularly resilient.

It is a prerequisite of Anderson's theory that someone is either harmed by the expression of racism or if they are not harmed, the speaker must then be motivated by a malevolent attitude. This raises an interesting case. A person who has no concept of racism and no understanding of the harm they are causing might say something racist and with no particular aim to be malevolent at all. They might say something offensive because they have heard someone else say it and they are simply repeating or copying this behaviour without any knowledge of what it means. It may be true that some say racist things without knowing they are racist but then the idea of a malevolent attitude seems to fail as a sufficient condition in this situation. Imagine a situation where the ignorant white man says something racist to the resilient black man and does not realise or understand why his remark is racist. If the resilient black man is not harmed then, on Anderson's model, the ignorant white man cannot really be accused of either malevolence or disregard, provided he also does not understand what he has done wrong. However, people can say racist things by mistake or without knowledge of what they are doing and it still does not constitute a disregard for their actions – they might be thinking very carefully about what they are saying but just have no idea of the implications. I am keen to endorse Anderson's definition but we will need to extend a caveat, which allows us to say someone's utterance or action can still be racist if they are unaware of the implications of what they are saying and doing. This is important because people may be guilty of racism either because they are unaware of the unconscious biases they hold against other races or because they hold a narrow or dated conception of what constitutes racism. People can undertake racist acts and hold racist beliefs without realising they are racist, and these acts are racist even if they do not cause immediate harm to a group of individuals. This caveat will become important as I revisit discussions on implicit bias in the next section.

There is still a lot of work to be done in this field, and on prejudicial forms of humour in general. These final concerns I have highlighted show how much there is still to do, especially when determining the number of categories, the definitions for each category and the type of humour from the content of the work. For instance, the jokes of Al Murray that we referred to earlier might still be difficult to categorise based on the above criteria and we may need to introduce special interpretive criteria for humour. In any case, I have done enough in this section to return to the case study from Chapter Two and reanalyse the character Apu from *The Simpsons* in light of this discussion. From here I will be able to argue that there are instances where we can assign interpretations to an artist's work that are not always consonant with their pronouncements of intent.

4.5 A Second Look: The Problem With Apu

In 2017 Hari Kondabolu made a documentary to look at the effects of stereotyping in American comedy and the media. He focused specifically on the treatment of Asians as seen in the character Apu of *The Simpsons,* which is the longest running prime time animated comedy series on television. Kondabolu says he was a fan of *The Simpsons* and it was a major influence on his comedy career (Kondabolu 2017). However, he takes series issue with the representation of his culture through Apu, a character he describes as his nemesis.

> [H]e's funny, but that doesn't mean this representation is accurate or right or righteous. It gets to the insidiousness of racism, though, because you don't even notice it when it's right in front of you. (Blauvelt 2017)

Throughout the documentary Kondabolu interviews various groups, including members of his family and young Indians living in America, who are not only offended by the depiction of Apu but have suffered racist abuse as a consequence. Either they have been called "Apu" themselves as a nickname or they have been harassed with lines made famous by the show. His first public appearance to critique Apu came at the behest of W. Kamau Bell, who told him to raise the issue of stereotyping in *The Simpsons* as part of Kondabolu's routine during the first season of the television show *Totally Biased* (Rao 2013). During the show Kondabolu was especially critical of Hank Azaria who voiced the character Apu. He said that Azaria was "a white guy doing an impression of a white guy making fun of my father" (Kondabolu 2012). He used the short segment as the basis of his documentary. Since then Hank Azaria has stepped down from the role because once he "realised that was the way the character was thought of, [he] just didn't want to be a part of it anymore" (Itzkoff 2020, para.6). Despite initially having a somewhat bristle reaction to Kondabolu's documentary he later cites it as a major contributing factor in his decision to step away from the role.

Matt Groening, who created and wrote *The Simpsons,* took the name Apu from the lead role in a series of films directed by Satyajit Ray, while Azaria based the voice on a man who worked in a convenience store near his house. Later Azaria conceded that Apu had been used by racially motivated bullies to deride people from India and South Asia. Additionally, as I have already explored in Chapter Two, the characterisation of Apu reduces an incredibly diverse and broad range of South Asian culture to one man in a corner shop with a curious accent. *The Simpsons* takes aim at a wide range of American culture from the corporate greed of Mr. Burns to the Bible belt of Ned Flanders. However, one of the problems is that *The Simpsons* mocks a huge range of white middle-American culture but suggest that all of Asian culture can be

easily reduced to this single character. Groening himself responded on more than one occasion to these accusations of racist content but was surprisingly dismissive, bordering on flippant at times. Speaking to USA Today he said, "I'm proud of what we do on the show. And I think it's a time in our culture where people love to pretend they're offended" (Keveney 2018). In other interviews he has also expressed dismay at the interpretation placed upon his character and he says whilst it is sad that the writing hurts people, he insists the content itself is not racist.

Another issue is related to power, where mocking Mr. Burns and other religious figures in the show is a way of *punching up* and characters like Apu are a way of *punching down*. Whilst it is often said that *The Simpsons* ridicules people from all different cultures and backgrounds, there is a difference between deploying humour in order to critique and dismantle power structures and deploying humour in the form of characters like Apu to make fun of marginalised immigrants. There is a tendency in popular culture to treat all racial wrongdoing as equally problematic regardless of race – this view is referred to as the colour-blind view. Blum (2011) has explained why this view misrepresents the ethical significance of asymmetries present in racism.

> Being the target of racial prejudice is a very different matter for a member of a socially vulnerable, stigmatized, or marginalized group than it is for a member of a nonstigmatized, dominant, or socially accepted group – even when the prejudice itself is of the same physchological character in the two cases. White people can indeed be the target of racial prejudice and even racial hatred, and this is very bad thing (a point denied by the misleading but popular view that only white people can be racist); but for an Arab American or an African American [or south Asian American] to be a target of such racial prejudice or hatred is, everything else being equal, substantially worse. For an Arab American to be hated by a white person typically and standardly invokes and makes psychically salient his or her sense of being stigmatized, of being socially marginal and vulnerable. The psychic damage to that individual Arab American is, then, typically substantially greater than that of a white person who is hated by an Arab American. The situations are not symmetrical. In this sense racial prejudice is not "color blind." (Blum 2011, pp. 204-205)

I do not believe that Groening's intent was malicious in the case of Apu, his statements on the matter appear to be genuine and he sincerely believes that the character he created was not a racist stereotype. However, I would argue that this is an instance of implicit bias where Groening is not aware of his underlying attitudes towards Indian culture and as a consequence cannot fully comprehend the consequences of his writing. We have already investigated

implicit bias in Chapter Two but for the sake of restating the case simply here, "the science of implicit cognition suggests that actors do not always have conscious, […] control over the processes of social perception, impression formation, and judgement that motivate their actions" (Greenwald & Hamilton Krieger 2006, p.946). In contrast, explicit bias refers to the attitudes and beliefs held by a person and motivate their actions on a conscious level. In recent times instances of explicit bias have fallen drastically. An article published in 1954 found that seven out of ten men would not approve of a black man marrying their daughter (Philpot 1954). Shortly after, these racial tensions – partly fuelled by fear and jealousy of relationships between black men and white women – were a contributing factor to the race riots in Nottingham and Notting Hill (Pilkington 1988). A poll taken in the wake of the riots found that 71% of people still had negative attitudes towards interracial couples and three years on nothing had changed when a further poll recorded a disapproval rate still at roughly 68% (Patterson 1965). Later surveys taken in Britain during the 1980's indicated that around half the population were opposed to interracial marriages and this figure had fallen nearly thirty five per cent by 2011 (Webb 2017). However, an implicit bias that we harbour without realising poses a more challenging problem. The IAT, which measures your level of bias in certain areas such as gender, ethnicity, sexual preference and even obesity, demonstrates whether or not you find it easier to associate pejorative words and phrases with particular groups. It was introduced at the turn of the century as a way to measure implicit bias in subjects and has since been adopted by research facilities across worldwide. The test was used for a project at Harvard and has been taken around eighteen million times by people visiting online. Results in the field have shown certain patterns emerging fairly consistently, namely a bias against ethnic minorities and an implicit bias against women (Brownstein 2016). Implicit bias is generally cited as part of the reason for the wage gap between genders and also as a reason that many more black males are shot in in America by police than white males. Hilary Clinton also cited implicit bias as an issue during her 2016 presidential campaign. As we have already noted in Chapter Two, it has been argued that the IAT (Implicit Association Test) is not a reliable tool for determining implicit bias and that it does not replicate its findings well (Oswald, Mitchell, Blanton, Jaccard & Tetlock 2013), but "even if it did turn out that the IAT is a poor measure of unintentional bias, that doesn't imply that the phenomenon isn't real" (Edmonds 2018, p.6).

In my view, Apu is a prime example of implicit bias at work where Matt Groening does not realise the prejudices he holds against the South Asian community. He is not knowingly being racist but his intentional actions are clearly motivated by an unconscious bias against South Asian culture in America. For instance, Apu has an unnecessarily long surname because the writers aimed to mock this part of his cultural heritage, he runs a convenience store which plays into the worst of the South Asian stereotypes in America and Great Britain, he has an

exaggerated accent voiced by a white man, in one episode he is depicted as a terrorist who stands on the roof of his shop with a gun and in another episode Apu takes a pilgrimage to the world's first convenience store in search of a wise sage who he hopes will tell him the secrets of the trade. This episode depicts South Asian Americans as subservient, a part of the service class and implies that convenience stores are places of worship for them. Given the work done earlier in this chapter, which demonstrates how complex the definition of racist humour can be, Groening might have too narrow an understanding of what counts as racism, hence his continued protestations that Apu is not a racist character. Returning to this work in the previous section for a moment, we recall that "racial humor is racist if either (i) it wrongly harms the target in virtue of that person's membership in a particular racial group or (ii) the speaker is motivated by a malevolent attitude or one of disregard." (Anderson 2015, p.6). Kondabolu's documentary clearly demonstrates that the character Apu harms audience members in virtue of their membership to a racial group and that, albeit unconsciously, the speaker is motivated by unsavory or dismissive attitudes towards South Asian culture. In this case we would have substantial reason to opt for a racist interpretation of the character Apu in spite of the sincere pronouncements of intent made by the creator.

One general worry might be that even if interpreters unanimously agree that the character of Apu is racist, this might not necessarily affect the meaning of the work. However, I contend that this is not a concern and that racist content which appears in the work, whether that takes the form of characters or subject matter, directly affects the meaning and nature of the work. To explain why I believe this to be the case I will use the example of Wagner, the German composer and polemicist known for his music, operas and his contentious anti-Semitic views. In many of his characters he alludes, albeit subtly, to Jewish stereotypes in order to attack Jewish culture. One of these characters is Mime, found in *Siegfried*, the third of the four musical dramas that constitute *Der Ring Des Nibelungen*. Mime is the antagonist to the heroic protagonist in the story and Jens Malte Fischer has even suggested that Wagner has left an anti-Semitic code in there for audiences to interpret. After watching a production of Siegfried in Vienna in the 1890s, Gustav Mahler wrote,

> With Mime, Wagner intended to ridicule the Jews with all their characteristic traits—petty intelligence and greed—the jargon is textually and musically so cleverly suggested. (Rose 1996, p.71)

Whilst it is made clear that Mime is Jewish, finding the allusions to anti-Semitism require paying close attention to detail. For instance, while Siegfried bravely fights the dragon Mime and his brother Alberich squabble over who is the most cunning, greedy and vicious. These

are often invoked as derogatory stereotypes of Jewish people. At another point Mime begins a passionate expression of grief and sorrow, which sounds remarkably Yiddish. Mime sings ungratefully about his parents, which refers to a con that Wagner believed Jewish people had performed.

> Mime – refers twice to what Wagner elsewhere wrote off as the great Jewish con game perpetrated on naive non-Jews, the notion of "gratitude" that placed the non-Jew in a position of dependency and indebtedness to the Jew, the child to the parent. We also find here Siegfried ridiculing the sputtering, cackling, misshapen speech and manner of Mime (and later Alberich) in terms very similar to the way Wagner describes the Jewish voice and singing in Jewishness in Music: "A croaking, squeaking, buzzing snuffle . . . that sense and sound confounding gurgle, yodel, and cackle." (Rose 2007, pp.192-193)

These characterisations were not inventions of Wagner's, rather they were "entrenched cultural references" that he chose to deploy in caricatures of Jewish people on stage (Weiner 1997, p.143). Not only are these overtly anti-Semitic themes, but if they can be instantiated as correct interpretations of the character then they also trespass overtly on the meaning contained in the work. If characters like Mime are racist characters then we can reasonably say that the work warrants a racist interpretation, as it intended to mock and deride Jewish culture.

Similarly, we can say that many aspects of *The Simpsons* contain racist themes which are the consequence of implicit bias held against minority cultures in American society. These characters and these themes are directly relevant to the interpretation of *The Simpsons* as an artistic work. If it transpired that symbols in a painting or characters in a story contained the same kinds of prejudicial references it would undoubtedly affect the meaning and interpretation of the work. If someone were to argue that these characters and themes do not affect the meaning of a work they have not adequately understood the scope and purpose of an artistic interpretation.

4.6 Conclusion

There are cases where the unconscious motivations and implicit biases found in the work lead the audience to form an interpretation that contradicts the pronouncements of the artist. In these cases, we are not disregarding the artists stated intentions but we are preferencing one criterion of intention over another because that the artists stated intentions are not sufficiently supported by the content of the work. In cases where the stated intent offers a more plausible explanation

of the content than the unconscious meanings found by the audience we are obliged to side with the pronouncements by the artist. However, in the case of Apu outlined above there is clear evidence to suggest the presence of implicit bias and unconscious prejudice against the South Asian community in Matt Groening's writing. He may continue to insist that the character he created is not racist but it clearly contravenes the general standards imposed by the literature for racist humour. Moreover, given that IAT and other tests have shown the presence of implicit bias in individuals across the world and that these unconscious prejudices affect our decision making, we have legitimate grounds to assume that Groening's pronouncements are sincere. He is not concealing some conscious racist ideology but rather harbouring an unconscious bias against certain ethnic minorities.

5. Pluralism, Monism and Reasonableness

This chapter seeks to address whether there can be multiple correct or admissible interpretations for a given work. Whilst moderate actual intentionalism points in the direction of a single correct interpretation, it doesn't explicitly endorse it. Additionally, interpretive monism seems to be an unfashionable belief in the contemporary art world (Maes 2017). In section 5.1 I will give a broad overview of the debate between pluralism and monism. Here I will explore the views of contemporary philosophers and show that there is a general trend in the literature towards pluralism, although it takes on many forms, and considerable resistance to the idea that there is a single, correct interpretation for any given work. In section 5.2 I will outline some versions of pluralism, which explicitly reject monism, and I will argue that each of these is insufficient. In section 5.3 I will argue (i) that for any given work of art there is a single, comprehensive, correct and unifying interpretation, (ii) this does not necessarily threaten the notion that various plausible interpretations should be brought to bear even if they cannot be unified under one single comprehensive interpretation, and (iii) that whilst (i) and (ii) are compatible, this compatibility should not be conflated with the idea that two contradicting interpretations can be held up in conjunction as part of the same single correct, comprehensive interpretation. There is a difference between an acceptable or admissible interpretation and the correct or true interpretation. I will show that whilst there might be many acceptable interpretations, which offer a plausible or reasonable account of the natural, non-natural and unconscious meanings in a given work, there can only be one single, comprehensive correct interpretation, which unifies all the compatible, true interpretations of a given work together. Fundamentally there is no reason to consider the interpretation of art different to the interpretation of action and conversation. There are correct and incorrect ways to interpret utterance and action, which are different to the plausible interpretations we ascribe based on the information available to us. It follows that there can be both plausible and correct interpretations of artworks.

5.1 The Philosophical Landscape

Pluralism is the view that works of art can have multiple interpretations and these interpretations can be equally legitimate even when they prove to be incompatible and cannot be unified in one single interpretation. As a consequence, pluralism champions the view that we should aim to bring many different perspectives to the interpretation of works. Pluralism does however claim that there are unacceptable interpretations of a work, else there would be no way of discerning between an accurate and an inaccurate interpretation. This distinction allows pluralism to ground itself in the debate and address important interpretive questions without seeming frivolous.

Critics often argue that their own interpretation is the correct one and that rival interpretations are mistaken or not focused on the salient details. This presupposes that there is one correct interpretation for any given work. Popular consensus has begun to shift on this point with artists, critics and philosophers preferring a plurality of possible interpretations. Increasingly it is claimed that monistic interpretations violate the works of art and cultural objects. The main reason offered in defence of this view is that cultural objects are historically situated and cannot easily be separated from a range of cultural practices including interpretation. If that is true then there will be multiple acceptable interpretations of a cultural object. Many proponents of this view argue that we should attribute properties to these objects, which are said to partly constitute them. For instance, abstract impressionism was a genre disproportionately populated by Jewish artists. This is generally attributed to the outpouring of emotion from the Jewish community during their persecution in the early twentieth century. Understanding this cultural significance frames the work in a particular historical trajectory. Similarly a Post-Structuralist critic might argue that to properly interpret an object it is important to analyse the various systems of knowledge that produced it was well as the object itself. However, because the principles and beliefs surrounding interpretation are so inconsistent, the properties themselves are precarious as opposed to factually grounded. In other words, because there are so many ways to talk coherently about the practice of interpretation it is not clear if there is one definitely correct way to construe a work of art. The conclusion drawn is that cultural objects do not have objectively instantiated properties and therefore cannot be subject to a single, correct, objective interpretation.

Michael Krausz (1993) has defended a version of pluralism, which he refers to as "multiplism", by arguing that critical comparison between competing interpretations hardly ever shows that one interpretation should supersede all others. Like many pluralists Krausz argues that his interpretation of a given work is right but he says such a conclusion is necessarily inconclusive. This form of pluralism allows for rational debate, but these debates are focused on whether or not an interpretation is acceptable or plausible rather than claiming an interpretation is the single, correct one. Pluralism rejects the idea that interpretive monism is of central importance to aesthetic interpretation or criticism (Krausz 1993). The pluralist argues that two incongruent interpretations can be considered admissible because one cannot clearly supersede the other. (I use the word incongruent here because incompatible does not describe the entire category of interpretations that are opposed. Multiplism agrees that incompatible interpretations are not admissible.) Krausz claims that what counts as an "admissible interpretation" (Krausz 1993, p.39) depends upon the social or cultural context. Additionally he argues that the inherent features of the object do not determine the relationship between the admissibility of an interpretation and the object being interpreted.

This may appear an unusual claim, because it seems self-evident that the interpretation of an object will naturally appeal to, or be reliant upon, the features and properties of the object itself. However, Krausz sees some objects as "practice-independent" (Krausz 1993, p.150), because he believes that coming to know or understand an object is a process of interpretation in itself. We cannot know about these objects for certain and as a consequence they are not completely determinate. If the object is not determinate then there cannot be a single, true or correct interpretation of it.

> I have adopted the word "indeterminate" rather than "vagueness", since indeterminacy suggests a feature of one's understanding or perception of that thing. Throughout this discussion indeterminacy has been used as a feature of a thing – either a practice-independent object (for the realist) or an object of interpretation (for a praxial constructionist) – rather than as a feature of one's understanding or perception on it. To say that some things are indeterminate does not violate the law of self-identity: that to be something it must be identical with itself, and not another thing. (Krausz 1993, p.150)

Krausz argues that we cannot know these practice-independent objects because their nature is unclear. Since "indeterminate" is a legitimate description of these practice-independent objects it follows that these objects could be open to multiple interpretations. For instance, clouds are indeterminate objects with indeterminate boundaries but that indeterminacy is identical with cloud.

In contrast, critical monism is the view that there is a single, comprehensive, correct interpretation for any given work. This interpretation unifies all true, compatible interpretations of the work and "comprehends the whole work" (Stecker 1994, p.193). Monism claims that a complete understanding of a work is ultimately reducible to a single, salient condition such as the intentions of the artist. Admissibility is defined by the ability to unify or conjoin interpretations into one comprehensive interpretation. Broadly speaking monists believe that incompatible interpretations should be understood in bivalent terms, which is to say that no incompatible interpretations can be held in conjunction or jointly defended. Monists such as David Novitz (2002) argue that works have one set of non-contradictory properties. Multiplists argue that these are not the criteria for admissibility, with philosophers such as Krausz (1993), Pettersson (2002) and Margolis (2002) defending the view that competing interpretations can be understood better simply in opposition rather than by appeals to binary logic, mutual-exclusion or contradiction. A binary approach would suggest that one set of interpretive criteria

could be invoked as superior over another. Therefore, the term "opposition" is preferred to "contradiction" because it acknowledges that we cannot definitively or objectively ground any single set of criteria for admissibility. Multiplists might strongly advocate one particular interpretation whilst recognising might have reasonable grounds to defend another. In general, multiplism prefers to define admissibility in terms of appropriateness and reasonableness.

A tactic used by pluralists to overcome incompatibility issues among conflicting interpretations is to establish the object of the conflicting interpretations. Often it turns out that each interpretation is taking a different thing as its object, which seems to alleviate concerns about incompatibility (or at least renders them slightly redundant). For instance, Goldman (2013) draws a distinction between actual texts and the fictional creations brought out in the texts. Goldman argues that interpretations of novels often seem to be in conflict when actually they are referring to these two different facets of the work as a whole. The fictional universe occupied by the characters and the story is much broader in scope than the text. For instance, many critics have interpreted Tolkein's classic *Lord of the Rings* as a religious allegory (Brown 2012) where others have argued there is no religious element, citing the absence of any religious institutions or rituals in the story itself (Greydanus 2019). Brown's interpretive approach seems to attend to the story as a whole, where Greydanus is concerned with the details of the story and the absence of any religious rituals in the plot.

The Tolkein example seems to point at a difference between the meaning found in sentences or elements of a work and the meaning found in a story at a more general level. Lamarque (2000) has argued that there is a distinction between utterance meaning and the meaning of a work, which in his mind is problem for the conversational model of meaning in aesthetics. It seems perfectly normal to ask what the meaning of my utterance was but comparatively unusual to ask what the meaning of *Pride and Prejudice* is. Lamarque is concerned that a complete work cannot have a single correct meaning. If the situation were so easily defused that one might simply point to the differing objects of interpretation to solve the problem then multiplism would not be required. However, multiplists point out that the properties of an object and how we identify them are actually affected by the very act of interpretation. Margolis (2002) argues that works are intentional, historically situated objects, but their identity is relative to this historical context even if the object itself remains much physically the same. Consequently, it is argued that there can be multiple equally admissible or correct interpretations of that object. There are various hermeneutical approaches that argue properties of objects can be altered by the method used to interpret the work. This is by no means a new phenomenon. John Berger has explored this concept in his book titled *Ways of Seeing* (1972). Berger compares post-renaissance paintings of women with pictures from modern pop culture and media to show the

objectification of women is still alive and well. He argues that this connection is not an accidental disturbance and that it has contributed our understanding of the female form and identity. This in turn constrains the way in which women live. He says that seeing is not simply reducible to the anatomy and mechanics of the eye. Looking at something is a choice and seeing what we look at is to place oneself in a particular context or relation to that object.

> We never look at just one thing; we always looking at the relation between things and ourselves. Our vision is [...] continually holding things in a circle around itself, constituting what is present to us as we are. (Berger 1972 p.9)

Once we have realised our relation to other objects we see, we become aware that others can see us. Conversations between people in relation to art often reflect this. Berger says that when we talk about art we are saying how we see things in order to work out how someone else sees things. There is a suggestion in Berger's work that these relations affect the meaning we find in works of art. He says that because of the conventions and the historical relations between the audience and the object we see artworks in a way we have never seen them before. These relations change what we are looking at and they change our point of view. Stecker (1994) and Novitz (2002) reject this idea on the grounds that interpretation does not alter the way an object actually is. There is a danger in their view that critics like Berger are focusing too heavily on the relations between artworks and the audience at the expense of analysing artworks themselves.

The importance of culture and convention are regularly reiterated amongst pluralists. Gary Hagberg (1998) is a pluralist but he has also discussed the dangers of focusing on the relations between objects at the expense of the objects themselves. He argues that understanding art from a subjective point of view can be complex because the contextual interrelations are often obscure. As one culture fades and is replaced by a new culture, the interrelations and contextual understanding fades with it. Changing points of view to a work of art will change the relational network between audience and artwork. We see a sculpture against a backdrop or we listen to a guitar solo against the drum line, rather than picking out the guitar itself and so on. Hagberg is wary of the considerable risk of focusing too closely on the relations rather than the object itself. We should be mindful that it might render the object interchangeable or dispensable. He says this is a fundamental mistake made by many widely held institutional theories of art. They claim relations to be of fundamental importance, institutionally empowered relations especially, then they eliminate the work all together in their interpretation.

Elsewhere the concept of interpretation itself has been the subject of some considerable scrutiny. Mohanty (2002) chooses to focus on interpretation as act, where the act shows an object or work as taking its meaning from a particular perspective. The work is the product of intentional action but it is also interpreted from different points of view. Vandevelde (2005) is also interested in interpretation as an act but he has argued that the debate between pluralism and monism has been "formulated in the wrong terms" (Vandevelde 2005a, p.503). He believes that there are two different aspects of interpretation called *act* and *event* respectively. Vandevelde says that the *act* refers to an act of consciousness where an agent makes a statement interpreting a text or work of art. If questioned about the statement the interpreter must be "committed [to] regarding the truth of what is said, his or her truthfulness, and the rightness or appropriateness of what is said" (Vandevelde 2005b, p.4). Interpretation as an *event* is situated in a cultural and historical context where the interpreter, the work and the audience are all part of something that happens. Interpretation as an *act* is a statement or series of statements justified by premises and conclusions about a given work. In contrast to Mohanty, Vandevelde believes that the mistake many pluralists make is to focus too heavily on interpretation as an event and neglect interpretation as an act. He argues that treating interpretation this way removes it from the domain of the subjective first-person and focuses exclusively on the socio-cultural relations that affect the interpreter.

Margolis (2002), Mohanty (2002) and Hagberg (2011) all agree that monism is overly restrictive and that works of art and cultural objects are sufficiently indeterminate and ambiguous that they should warrant more than one interpretation. Many monists try to find the single correct interpretation by understanding the actual intentions of the artist or author. However, many pluralists have argued even if these intentions were available to us they could be open to interpretation. Levinson (2010) is an advocate of hypothetical intentionalism which offers a middle ground by arguing that all the is required is a best hypothesis of the artist's intentions made by an informed audience, rather than the artist's actual intentions. As we have already discussed, hypothetical intentionalists often offer an implied figure that stands as a construct between the audience and the work, to which we assign the hypothetical intentions. Hypothetical intentionalists do not believe we should consult the artist directly for her intentions because the work should be allowed to stand alone in some sense. In contrast, philosophers such as Noel Carroll (2013), Robert Stecker (2006b) and Hans Maes (2010) have defended moderate actual intentionalism, which argues that pronouncements of intention made by the artist are an important epistemic consideration in the interpretation of works. Even if we admit the pronouncements of intent by the artist it is still not decided whether or not monism or pluralism would necessarily apply to this account. For instance, Garry Hagberg identifies as an intentionalist but he advocates for a kind of pluralism. Monists generally argue their case

based on the premise that the act of interpreting has truth as its aim. However, Stecker (2001) and Lamarque (2000) have pointed out that not all acts of interpretation make truth their goal.

The challenge then of the proper aim issue is to establish what we should be doing when we interpret a work of art. If there were an objective set of criteria to consult then we would not have an issue, however any attempt to establish said criteria is a problem, because there is no specific or definitive reason to take one set or criteria as the correct one. In the act of interpreting people might be doing one thing but that is not to say they are partaking in the right sort of activity. Stecker (2001) points out that so long as we are not making drastic mistakes based on false premises and our aims are useful for evaluative purposes it is difficult to object to other interpretive methods. If only one aim fit these criteria then only one aim would be acceptable, if not then a number of aims are acceptable. Stecker argues that there are various plausible interpretive aims argued for in the literature. For instance, he says there is much in the way of philosophical theory that aims to identify the artist's intentions as a way of understanding their works. There are those critics who disregard the intentions of the artist completely favouring interpretations that rely on conventional or structural meanings, where other critics such as Davies (2007) and Goldman (2013) choose to focus on appreciation or value maximisation, for which there are many admissible interpretations. As we have already discussed, value maximisation theory claims that the primary goal of an interpretation should be to maximise the value of the work. This theory does not claim there is one single way to maximise the value of a work. In fact, it could be argued that any number of interpretations serves this purpose. For instance, Nabakov's *Lolita* has been the subject of many controversial critical appraisals each of which highlights the disgusting brilliance of his work in a different way. It is difficult to argue for a single, definitive best interpretation among them, but as long as the interpretation is insightful or enhancing we should count it has value maximising. If the value maximiser and the anti-intentionalist are content to accept that their position brings with it a degree of ambiguity and indeterminacy then there is no reason to assume that one method is less valuable in the field of aesthetics than it is in any other context where interpretation is required. Stecker believes that the value maximisation theory is a valuable pursuit precisely because it is so difficult to identify a single appropriate aim for interpretation. The possibility of multiple aims is indicative of the multifaceted nature of interpretation as a subject. Stecker explains that whilst there might be many proper aims, his own aim is to find the truth about the meaning of a given work. This search for truth is a search that tries to identify the intentions of the artist through the content of the work. I will develop an exposition of Stecker and these theories in the next section.

5.2 Compatibility Issues

There are many iterations of pluralism that explicitly state their incompatibility with monism. In this section I want to explore some of those pluralist models that claim to be incompatible with monism and assess their validity. I will first examine the claim by Stecker that monism and pluralism are compatible.

There is a difference between a correct interpretation and an acceptable interpretation. The correctness of an interpretation depends on its truth or falsity, the acceptability of an interpretation is contingent upon a much broader range of criteria. An interpretation might fail to help us understand a work or it might miss out important facts choosing to focus on extraneous details instead. There are many reasons why an interpretation can fail the acceptability test. Stecker (1994) has argued that the crucial underlying fact that ties all acceptability criteria together is the aims of the interpreter and the audience. Acceptability of interpretation depends upon the aim of either one and the purpose of the interpretation. For instance, as we have already discussed, the aim of the interpreter could be to maximise the value of the work, it could be to establish the meaning of the work by appealing to the intentions of the artists or it could be to place the work in a particular historical trajectory. In contrast an audience might be in search of an aesthetic experience or some more general appreciation of a work. Stecker is more interested in the aims of the interpreter than the aims of the audience but he says the correctness of an interpretation is not contingent upon individual agency in the same way as acceptability. The kinds of interpretation he says are neither true nor false but still acceptable might be those interpretations, which do not aim to represent the work in terms of its cultural and historical context. These interpretations are not necessarily focused on the work as an intentionally produced object with a set of fixed truths relative to the time of production. Instead these interpretations might be trying to give us a contemporary understanding of an old work, explaining how these archaic fables might be relevant to our contemporary existence. The example he gives is a collection of essays by Kott titled *Shakespeare Our Contemporary*, in which Kott gives us a way of thinking about the characters, plots and settings "relevant to a contemporary audience" (Stecker 1994, p.195). Another example might be *Jane Austen: Then and Now*, a course at Princeton University which pairs six Jane Austen novels with modern texts in an effort to demonstrate the interactive and complicated relationship between the past and present. The course content focuses on issues such as love, sex, gender and feminism asking students to think about age-old issues in new ways. These kinds of interpretation allow the work to stand alone in some sense for Stecker and he argues that whilst they are not necessarily correct readings of the original work, they are still acceptable interpretations. Stecker argues that monism and pluralism are compatible if we treat acceptability and correctness separately in this way. All true interpretations can be joined together to create one

comprehensive, correct interpretation and this does not exclude the possibility of a plurality of other acceptable interpretations, which are neither true nor false.

Whilst Stecker is adamant that monism and pluralism are compatible, there are many versions of the pluralist argument that explicitly reject monism. He outlines three positions in particular that explicitly reject monism for different reasons, these are Relativism, Anti-Descriptivism and Value Maximisation. Relativists claim that there are true interpretations but these interpretations cannot be brought together in one unifying, comprehensive interpretation. Relativists point out that just as there are multiple meanings for words like "fall" or "set" there can be multiple meanings for a given work. Interpretations are just the various meanings a work might have. Lamarque (2000) has already explained the issues with conflating the meanings of words with the meanings of works. Even when the meanings are contradictory by implication, they still provide plausible accounts of what a work could mean so they need not be thrown out immediately. Additionally, just because a word such as "fall" has multiple possible meanings, when it is deployed in a specific context its meaning becomes fixed by that context and the other possible meanings fail to apply.

When we interpret a work of art we engage with and attempt to understand it. Certain intellectual baggage that we bring to this process such as beliefs, assumptions and conventions we have learned mars our attempts. Many relativists such as Fish (1980) have chosen to focus on this intellectual baggage as the main feature of interpretation. They argue that the "truth of an interpretation is relative to these beliefs", assumptions and conventions that we carry as interpreters (Stecker 1994, p.196). Bringing various beliefs and assumptions to a work will often result in various incompatible interpretations. An interpretation can only be understood as true relative to the assumptions or beliefs from which they derive.

However, this is clearly not the case. Take the example of the 1965 film *The Sound of Music*. This story is usually interpreted as a small group of anti-fascist democratic Austrians, resisting and fighting the Nazi occupation of Austria in 1938. However, Zizek (2004) has offered an alternative interpretation, largely grounded in his particular brand of Lacanian psychoanalysis. Zizek says that if you look at the film more closely you find a different virtual reality that sits separate to the officially depicted narrative. He argues that Austrians are actually depicted as small groups of beautiful, provincial fascists. From their folkloric dresses and Captain Von Trapp's sense of order in the house to their presentation as anti-intellectuals rooted in hard work they demonstrate many traits of the archetypal fascist group. In contrast the occupying Nazis are presented as managers and bureaucrats, exquisitely dressed with short moustaches. This is almost the exact picture presented at the time of the cosmopolitan, corrupted Jew in Europe.

Zizek argues that on this psychoanalytic level *The Sound of Music* is actually a fundamentally racist film that panders to the worst of the anti-Semitic psyche at the time of its conception.

The critic who offers up the psychoanalytic interpretation brings various assumptions and beliefs to bear on the work. Mainly 1) that such unconscious prejudices exist and motivate human behaviour and 2) that these unconscious prejudices can be expressed by the scriptwriters in their work. The relativist argues that these two interpretations can only be evaluated in terms of the assumptions and beliefs from which they started, so both of these interpretations can be true in their own right. However, this is clearly not the case, whilst both interpretations could be considered *acceptable*, because they offer a plausible account of the meaning of the work, they cannot both be true. This is because they violate the law of contradiction; namely that a work cannot mean p and ¬p at the same time. Many people have criticised Freudian, Lacanian and psychoanalytic schools of thought when it comes to interpretation. There is no reason why these cannot be presented as competing interpretations. The same would apply to the school of New Criticism, the biographical critics, the formalists and the deconstructionists. Just because deconstruction claims that the structure of language is fundamentally unstable does not mean that it is, or that Derrida and others are not subject to the same criticism as anyone else. The relativist account fails because there is no reason to draw conclusions about the truth of interpretations relative simply to the assumptions, beliefs or conventions of the interpreter.

Anti-descriptivism claims that there are no true interpretations of a given work. This school of thought does not face the intricate issues of the relativists, but it has challenges of its own to contend with. Anti-descriptivism must do two things 1) show why interpretations cannot be true 2) explain what the status or goal of an interpretation is if it is not true or false. The latter of these two questions might be answered simply by saying that interpretations can be acceptable or unacceptable, in the sense that they give a plausible or an implausible account of the work and that is all we can ever say. As we have seen in Stecker's work this does not require truth claims. Alternatively a more radical version of this position might say that even acceptability is not necessary and art is not bound by conventional logic in any way. Such people might advocate that meaning is entirely decided by the audience and whatever they find through their own aesthetic experience they may sensibly attribute to the work. M.C. Escher could be argued to have taken a similar position, when he told a woman in conversation that she was welcome to interpret his lithograph titled *Reptiles* however she wished.

> A woman once rang me up and said, 'Mr. Escher, I am absolutely crazy about your work. In your print "Reptiles", you have given such a striking illustration of

> reincarnation.' I replied, 'Madame, if that's the way you see it, so be it.' (Ernst 2007, p.18)

Margolis (2002) has defended the less radical claim arguing that interpretations do not have the property of being true or false but they have similar qualities. Therefore interpretations can be assessed for plausibility even if they cannot be assessed for truth. Margolis argues that artworks are cultural objects that lack an essential, unchanging nature. He suggests instead that they are objects with histories shaped by human craft and the cultural relations between the historical paradigm and the art affect the meaning of the work.

> To admit the constructed and historicized nature of the intentional world makes it impossible to view objectivity in cultural matters as anything but a constructed norm subject to indefinitely extended historicized revisions. Cultural understanding is essentially a society's self-understanding, formed under the conditions of radical history by creatures who are themselves the precipitates of that same process. It is impossible to draw from these conditions grounds for championing anything like the unique-interpretation thesis. (Margolis 2002, p.43)

Since it seems prudent to concede that interpretations can be acceptable without being true, the important thing to understand is why one might argue that interpretations are never true. Various answers to this question have been offered and I will look at two main examples and argue that each of them is insufficient.

Matthews (1977) has argued that the kind of evidence usually required to prove something true or false is not available to the interpreter. He says that external evidence is not relevant to the truth of an interpretation only the internal content of the work can be a relevant consideration. This is not the same as external evidence not being available, because even where it was available Matthews would discount it. Matthews also argues that critics only ever really know the evidence that supports their interpretation. He goes on to say that since interpretations are not considered to be true at the point of conception, the interpreters cannot argue that the evidence upon which they based their interpretation is sufficient to prove the interpretation true. If the evidence was not sufficient at the point of conception to invoke truth or falsity then nothing has changed to make it sufficient diachronically.

It could be argued that Matthews's argument is based on series of unsound premises. First, there is no reason to suppose external evidence is irrelevant to the interpretation of works, publicly available information or biographical evidence can be incredibly valuable in forming

an interpretation. Second, Matthews conflates evidence of intention with external evidence, which as I have already explained in previous chapters is a mistake. There is plenty of internal evidence for artistic intention because intentions are not mental phenomena confined to the mind, they are inexorably linked to our actions and the artistic choices made in their work. Thirdly, Matthews is right that we might not have access to all the relevant evidence at the point of forming an interpretation but we don't need all the evidence, only sufficient evidence. For instance, I might find one piece of defining evidence that renders any further investigation futile or I may think, given what I know, I have enough to argue that my interpretation is the correct one. Either way, by the time I form my interpretation I have done enough investigating to argue my interpretation is correct.

Alternative versions of anti-descriptivism such as Torsten Pettersson's are equally questionable. Pettersson (1986) describes interpretations as "implications" of a work and its content. He argues that when we interpret literary works we look for a series of possible implications from the words and these implications are either plausible or implausible. However, they are not correct or incorrect, simply hypotheses about the words and the context in which they stand. There are a vast number of possible implications for most sentences or phrases. For instance, the sentence "we need to go to the shops" could be said to convey a need for some commodity, but it could also be used to get someone to stop messing around and focus on that particular task, it could be used to tell someone to get ready to leave or it could be a reference to a future requirement with no imminent action planned. In general conversation our first cognitive goal is to narrow down the possible implications by looking at the context and attempting to establish the utterer's intentions. However, Pettersson says that in a fictional work the characters are fantasy so the range of possibilities is not fixed to a "frame of reference" in the same way (Pettersson 1986, p.153). Here Pettersson is in danger of making the same mistake as Matthews, by treating the content of the work as totally divorced from the intentions of the artist and the historical context in which it is written. Pettersson's argument only holds water for one kind of interpretation, namely the kind where the speaker is not real and there is no specific context in which to locate the meaning of the words. However, when we consider the whole work in light of the artist or author we see that there is another way of locating the meaning behind the work. Pettersson fails to demonstrate that all interpretations function the same way and therefore fails to show that all interpretations are only plausible or implausible, not correct or incorrect. If we aim to discover the reason why a writer or an artist made a particular choice in their work and we understand the work as a historically situated object, then we have a fixed frame of reference from which to derive meaning. Logically therefore we can expect interpretations to be true or false, even in cases where we cannot establish their truth or falsity explicitly.

Value maximisers claim that whilst there are true interpretations we cannot necessarily bring together true interpretations to make one larger acceptable interpretation. It is different from relativism because it is more concerned with the appropriate aims of interpretation. This is less a rejection of monism and more an objection to the fact that monism is an inappropriate aim of criticism and interpretation. Alan Goldman (1990) is a proponent of this theory who argues that interpretations of literary works are "inferences to [artistic] value maximising explanations" (Goldman 1990, p.207). These accounts all claim the main aim of interpretation to be the maximisation of aesthetic value. Goldman believes that various interpretations explain the work and its value for different reasons and from different perspectives. He argues that all forms of intentionalism are too restrictive and prefers an account that allows for interpretations unintended by the artist because they allow the "event and characters to speak for themselves" (Goldman 2013, p.81). He does however also want an account that is true to the text. Goldman argues that we can have both, unburdening ourselves from this arbitrary commitment to authorial intentions. He notes that artists often accept that critical evaluations and interpretations come up short of their expectations so they should also accept that interpretations could exceed them. Goldman says that an interpretation, which allows a work to stand-alone, can "provoke a rich variety of interpretations that reward the reader in different ways" (Goldman 2013, p.81).

I have two main concerns with this theory. First, intention is not an arbitrary criterion on which to base an interpretation, as I have explained elsewhere in this thesis intention and action are inexorably linked. Second, value maximisation is sufficiently vague that could mean a number of things. For instance, it could mean that the aim of an interpretation is to make the work as valuable as possible or it could mean that the aim of an interpretation is to be more valuable than other interpretations. If the former then this will be an impossible task since the limit of a work's value could be determined by a number of people. If the audience determined the value of a work then there are endless possibilities for the most valuable interpretations of the work depending on the interests of the individual. For instance, a member of the audience who prefers to see *The Prince* as a terrific work of irony will consider more serious or literal interpretations less valuable than the member of the audience who prefers to read Machiavelli's philosophical sentiments as sincere. On the other hand, if it is the latter then it seems to be an even more arbitrary criterion for interpretation than intention. It is also not clear how we can have competing or incompatible interpretations on this model if the only interpretive constraint is value maximisation.

In this section I have explored some accounts of pluralism that explicitly reject monism and I have shown why they are not sufficient. In the next section I will argue in defence of monism but I will explain the circumstances in which we might embrace a plurality of conflicting interpretations.

5.3 Acceptability, Correctness and Reasonableness

Whilst I agree with Stecker that there is a difference between acceptability and correctness, and that pluralism and monism are compatible in some sense, I do not necessarily agree for the same reasons that he gives. Perhaps surprisingly, I would agree with multiplists who argue that the criterion of *reasonableness* ultimately decides what counts as an acceptable or admissible interpretation. However, the correctness of an interpretation remains dependent on truth or falsity. In this section I will explore both categories of acceptability and correctness in more detail. I will explain how the criterion of reasonableness might be understood given the broad range of possibilities it seems to allow.

An acceptable interpretation should be understood in terms of the possible inferences it is reasonable to make about the artist's intentions or the unconscious meaning given the content of the work, the statements of intent from the artist and the publicly available information. My resistance to allowing reasonable interpretations that bear no relation to intention is largely motivated by a concern for the artist herself. It seems intuitive to me that if we can make claim about the meaning of a work that has no bearing on the intentions of the artist, then the artist is potentially open to unfair public criticism. For instance, suppose that an artist produces an abstract piece with the intention of conveying a particular emotion on a subject. As the piece is abstract it does not seem to be immediately obvious from the content alone what the piece is about. At this point the critic who does not concern herself with intentions attacks the piece because she senses a sinister undertone in the way the paint strikes the paper. The critic suggests that perhaps the work is promoting racism because she can see red shapes that bear a vague and unlikely resemblance to swastikas in the background. At this point an intentionalist would consult the relevant contextual information in order to establish whether this was a reasonable suggestion. However, a critic unconstrained by these concerns might be able to invoke this interpretation as reasonable, disregarding the protestations of the artist and accusing them unfairly of racism.

All interpretations should aim to explain the work and aim at uncovering its true meaning but they may turn out to be false after further investigation or information comes to light. In the event of new information coming to light, such as sincere, private avowals of intention made

by the artist, crucial biographical information or other works that help to directly contextualise a work, then we should be open to reconsider which interpretations are acceptable and which are not. For instance, returning to our previous example, suppose that diaries were later uncovered with entries which suggest our artist was a Nazi sympathiser or had committed racially motivated attacks, then we would have cause to revisit our case for acceptability.

However, further investigation does not always render them unacceptable. Some information that comes to light might be debatable, questionable or arguable in either direction and the correct interpretation might be rendered ambiguous. For instance, in my earlier defence of moderate actual intentionalism I used the example of the painting titled *Two Faced* by Matt Sharp. Sharp told me that tics from his Tourette's syndrome had caused the thick black lines on the painting but he persevered with it anyway. The hypothetical intentionalist would surely argue that the lines and the faces were an attempt to convey the dark side of living with Tourette's but Matt's own pronouncements of intent seem to reject that interpretation. Whilst in my view this pronouncement of intent by Sharp renders the hypothetical intentionalist position incorrect, it does not necessarily render it unacceptable. The reason for this is that the hypothetical intentionalist could argue that these pronouncements of intent made by the artist were not sincere because he could have fabricated the story retrospectively in order to generate publicity around his work.

Plausible accounts should aim to locate the artist's intentions, the natural meaning or the unconscious meaning within the conventional meanings and historical or linguistic contexts. It is difficult to explicitly define the contours of this reasonableness but we can give clear scenarios where there are reasonable and unreasonable interpretations of a given work. For instance, *Fight Club* is an American film directed by David Fincher, based on the 1996 novel by Chuck Palahniuk. The story focuses on an unnamed narrator who starts a fight club with soap salesman Tyler Durden and later they form a paramilitary organisation together[12]. Michael (1999) and Randy (2015) report that *Fight Club* is an exploration into the anxieties of Generation X[13]. Edward Norton who played the unnamed narrator in the film supported this theory. Smith (1999) claims that the film is a study of Nietzschean philosophy, where Tyler Durden is the Übermensch, a fiction created by a man who has nothing and who feels helpless to change his circumstances. In a similar vein, Dassanowsky (2007) argues that *Fight Club* is an examination of European Fascism through metaphor. Whilst it is partly a symbol for the

[12] As it turns out there is only one person named Tyler Durden who has developed a split personality due to sleep deprivation.
[13] 'Generation X' is the generation that followed the 'Baby Boomers' and is generally considered to be disaffected and directionless; growing up on consumerism, television and information technology.

National Socialist movement, Dassanowsky also argues that the inception of *project mayhem* is a response to feminism and the perceived feminisation of American culture. Additionally, he claims that the scenes, in which Tyler Durden makes soap from the waste fat found at the liposuction clinic, are a direct reference to the holocaust. In contrast, Giroux and Szeman (2001) have argued that *Fight Club* is a failed critique of consumerist culture. They claim that the film focuses too heavily on consumerism as the root cause of warped male identity and neglects to mention the real issue of capitalism.

> Fight Club has nothing substantive to say about the structural violence of unemployment, job insecurity, cuts in public spending, and the destruction of institutions capable of defending social provision and the public good. (Giroux & Szeman 2001, p.96)

Other interpretations situate *Fight Club* in the political debate between libertarian anarchism and socialism, whereas Gandal (2007) says that the film offers the audience radical slumming notions with lines such as "it's only when you've lost everything that you are free to do anything" (Gandal 2007, p.155). There is a case to be made by reference to the content of the work and the context in which it should be understood, for each of these as intentional meanings. Many of these interpretations are also compatible and could be conjoined into one comprehensive interpretation in a disjunctive way. For instance, each of the interpretations above seems to be in some way supported by evidence in the story and it seems reasonable to suggest that each of them could be representative of the artist's intentions. Take the interpretation that says *Fight Club* is a critique of feminist American culture. There is evidence that Palahniuk resented his father's girlfriend Donna Fontaine whom he met through a personal ad. Fontaine had previously dated a man who was in prison convicted of sexual abuse and he had vowed to get revenge upon his release. Sure enough after his release he shot Palahniuk's father and Fontaine dead at her home in Idaho. Palahniuk believes that Fontaine manipulated his father into dating her because she wanted protection (Palahniuk 2006). One could reasonably make the argument that, consciously or unconsciously, Palahniuk wanted to protest against the dominant female figures in his life by holding them responsible for the loss of his father. Whilst this is completely separate to the metaphors for National Socialism, the tributes to Nietzsche and the critique of consumerist culture, none of these interpretations seem to directly contradict one another. Since they do not violate the laws of contradiction they could be unified into a single disjunctive interpretation.

In the absence of a definitive piece of evidence rendering all other interpretations inadmissible and incorrect, all of these interpretations are plausible and reasonable despite being fairly wide ranging. However, if someone were to make the argument that *Fight Club* was a period-drama,

which tried to highlight the ethical issues surrounding eating meat, we would have grounds to say that this interpretation was not admissible. There is no contextual evidence, no conventional or cultural context and generally no reason to suggest that this was in line with Palahniuk's intentions for the book. For the interpretations above we can find sufficient evidence in the work and in the extra-textual information to form sufficient basis for a reasonable interpretation. No such evidence exists for the period-drama interpretation. In fact there are many interpretations that are clearly not acceptable given the range of possible intended meanings. There is not sufficient content or contextual evidence to support many claims, even in the form of cinematic metaphor. Like literal and conventional meanings, metaphorical interpretations can fail to obtain in instances where it is not clear how they relate to the message they are supposed to convey. For instance, George Orwell's *Animal Farm* is famously interpreted as a metaphor for the Russian revolution. Jones's farmhouse represents the Kremlin and a place of greed occupied by the bourgeoisies, whereas the barn is the home of the proletariat where socialism reigns. "Animalism" bears a striking resemblance to communism where it was supposed to solve fundamental problems and all the animals were meant to end up equal. Even the characters seem to resemble historical figures; the Old Major who formulates Animalism dies before seeing his idea come to fruition, just as Karl Marx died before the revolution. Meyers (1975, p.249) points out that "virtually every detail has significance in this political allegory." Additionally, Orwell himself confirmed in his letters that he intended the book to be a metaphor for the revolution.

> Of course I intended it primarily as a satire on the Russian revolution […] that kind of revolution (violent conspiratorial revolution, led by unconsciously power-hungry people) can only lead to a change of masters revolutions only effect a radical improvement when the masses are alert. (Orwell 2013, p.334)

It is clear how and why *Animal Farm* is a metaphor for the Russian revolution. The content and the pronouncements of intent made by the artist clearly to support this interpretation. If an alternative interpretation was presented suggesting that Orwell's classic was actually an allegory about the dangers of climate change we would have cause to say that this interpretation was not acceptable. There is not only no evidence to support such a claim in the content of the work but also the private avowals from the artist together with the publicly available information seem to contradict this claim. Since we have no reason to assume that these avowals are insincere, we can safely side with the widely accepted interpretation.

Whilst it is difficult to outline the specific criteria for acceptability when it comes to interpretation what we can do is to outline clear examples of interpretations that are admissible

and interpretations that are not admissible. There may be challenging cases that test the limits of interpretive practice, but surely it is the function of philosophy to have continued discussion about these challenges as they arise. Just because we cannot pinpoint exactly where the line for reasonableness and acceptability should be drawn does not mean it does not exist.

Interpretations are correct insofar as they offer the true meaning of the work. Any true, comprehensive interpretation of a given work must acknowledge that the work is a cultural object, the result of intentional action, may have been motivated by certain unconscious influences and is produced in a particular historical context. True comprehensive interpretations conjoin all compatible interpretations, which correspond to these elements of the work. Carroll (2013) has pointed out that the refined and more moderate intentionalist does not simply invoke the meaning the author intended by default. The moderate intentionalist argues that intentions are relevant insofar as they are supported by the content of the work taken in the appropriate conventional and historical context.

> Thus, where the conventional meanings available in the text are open to more than one interpretation, the intentionalist sides with the interpretation that accords with the author's intention (or our best hypotheses of authorial intent). (Carroll 2013, p.325)

If there is only one interpretation of the work the intentionalist assumes that it is synonymous with the artist's intentions. If, after further examination, it turns out that the artist does not acknowledge this interpretation to be in accordance with her intentions, we can conclude that the artist has failed to realise her intentions in the work. Alternatively, we can choose to understand the work as the result of an unconscious belief or influence, but we cannot hold multiple contradictory interpretations to be true simultaneously. We have no good reason to believe that our interpretation of artworks is substantially different to our interpretation of action and conversation because they are the product of the same cognitive space. The first cognitive goal of conversation is to establish what the speaker intended by her utterance or action. Art making is a form of action even if it is not always intended as a form of communication so it follows that this is a suitable model for understanding works of art.

5.4 Objections and Replies

Several objections and replies might be put forward against the work in this chapter, but I will to focus on three in particular. 1) That unconscious intentions by their very nature often conflict with conscious intentions, and so by acknowledging the presence of these unconscious intentions I should acknowledge that sometimes interpretations might legitimately involve

contradictory meanings being put forward. The nature of the unconscious mind is precisely that tensions appear between thoughts at the conscious level and conflicting thoughts at an unconscious level. 2) That interpretations of art are not the same as conversations or other similar forms of utterance and so they are not governed so strictly by binary rules of interpretation such as the principle of bivalence. 3) The multiple authorship view could present a threat to my thesis because if multiple intentions of different authors are equally admissible then there could be a situation where contradictory interpretations of a given work are held in conjunction.

The first objection does indeed pose a challenge. As discussed earlier in Chapter Two, there are various conceptions of the unconscious with their roots in Freudian psychoanalytic theory, which claim there is a conflict between elements of the unconscious and the conscious mind. According to Freud this conflict occurs between the id and the super-ego and this conflict produces anxieties. However, we do not need to subscribe to the Freudian psychoanalytic concepts of egos and super-egos in order to imagine that there are instances where the unconscious beliefs which sit beneath the surface are often in conflict with our conscious desires, and that this conflict might manifest itself in the action. For instance, a person who suddenly loses his temper over some innocuous event could be expressing anger at a repressed issue which is present elsewhere in his mind. If we apply this to the interpretation of art, one might argue that an artwork could embody both the unconscious desires and the conscious thoughts of the artist. For instance, an artist might draw a portrait of her mother, consciously believing it to be a tribute to a strong female role model in her life. However, she is harbouring repressed feelings of hatred dating back to her childhood which she is not able to acknowledge, perhaps because they have formed as a consequence of abuse. As a consequence, the portrait exhibits both elements of majesty and sinister darkness. The pluralist might argue that this portrait warrants conflicting interpretations, where both the respect for the mother and the hatred for her are present in the painting.

I have two concerns with examples such as these. First, the fact that elements of the painting point towards a repressed hatred and elements point toward a great respect for a strong role model, does not necessarily preclude the kind of monism I have defended. These two emotions can be combined to form a single, unified interpretation which acknowledges both contrasting emotions in the meaning of the work. The fact that elements of the painting point toward one emotion does not preclude or exclude the possibility of other meanings being found in other parts of the painting.

Second, let us suppose that two ideas or concepts were present in the painting which are in direct conflict, and potentially stand to violate the rule of bivalence (that something cannot be p and ¬p simultaneously) because they cannot be incorporated into a single, compatible interpretation. Here I would argue it is not the case that both p and ¬p can be held as separate, correct interpretations at once, but rather that an interpretation *q* could be put forward which represents a synthesis derived from the conflict between propositions p and ¬p. The conflict between the unconscious thought and the conscious one produces a result *q* and it is that result *q* which we are interpreting not the conflicting propositions which precede *q*. For instance, imagine a piece of art which expressed an unconscious bias in the form of racism but the conscious intention of the artist was to make an anti-racist statement through the work. The artist thinks they are making a statement on behalf of a minority group but because they are not from that group they do not properly understand their experiences. An example might be an artist responsible for some *All Lives Matter* artwork, which is associated with criticism of the *Black Lives Matter* movement. *Black Lives Matter* (BLM) is a political and social movement which originally formed to protest against, and raise awareness of, police brutality and racially motivated violence against black people. *All Lives Matter* responded by calling for racial unity and equality regardless of colour or creed. However, as Chapman (2020) has pointed out, whilst both claims, *Black Lives Matter* and *All Lives Matter*, are true at surface level, the proponents of *All Lives Matter* have either misunderstood how limited this claim is or they are being deliberately disingenuous. Chapman argues that, "all lives matter is being said as a challenge to the claim that black lives matter, as a way of pushing back against and drowning out the voices of those saying that black lives matter, as a way of...forcing listeners to choose whether it is all lives that matter or merely black lives (which, of course, is not what 'Black Lives Matter' means)" (Chapman 2020). Whilst it is true that *All Lives Matter* has been used by right-wing white supremacists to attack racial minorities and dilute or undermine their protests, many supporters of *All Lives Matter* do not really understand the implications of this movement and genuinely want to achieve unity and equality by interpreting this statement at surface level. In this case, some of the *All Lives Matter* artwork might present a conflict, because the attempt by the artist is to call for unity and racial equality, but on an unconscious level it could be argued that the artist has not properly understood what life is like for black people who face persecution and abuse on a daily basis. Worse still, the artist may in fact harbour an unconscious bias against black people that she is not aware of, and so it would seem to be the case that the unconscious meanings present in the work conflict with the conscious intentions of the artist.

I maintain that in this case the work cannot be both racist and not racist simultaneously. Once a work is interpreted as racist it can be described as any number of other things, such as unamusing, distasteful, narrow-minded, however the one interpretation which is not then

possible to attribute to the work is "not racist". Instead I suggest that the appropriate way to form an interpretation is to take a dialectical approach, where the synthesis is the result of the conscious and unconscious ideas colliding. We would look at the context of the utterance, the publicly available information about the artist and the content of the work and if we decided that both the unconscious intentions and the stated intentions of the artist both provide an equally powerful case for the interpretation of the work, then we might form a synthetic interpretation which acknowledged the ambiguity or conflict present in the work. This would be consonant with the artist's intentions because it would reflect the conflict or confusion apparent in their mind at the time of composition. Alternatively, we might use the method I suggested in the previous chapter, which is simply to preference one form of intention over another and dig deeper to establish which intention provides the most plausible explanation for the work.

Turning our attention to the second objection, we notice that many philosophers such as Davies (1982) and Goldman (1990) have argued that aesthetic interpretations are somehow different to the interpretations of other human action because, as Jerold Levinson (1996) has said, we are not trying to defer so hastily to what the artist meant in aesthetic interpretation as we are in general conversation.

> An aesthetic interest concerns itself primarily with the most aesthetically rewarding reading that may be put upon the words used, and this reading may well be different from the one that the author intended his work to receive. If several readings are equally aesthetically rewarding, then there is no reason to prefer one reading over the other as giving *the* aesthetically correct reading. An author's statements of intention are to be taken as *recommendations* that the work be read one way rather than another and, in principle if not in fact, his recommendations have no more a claim upon us than do the recommendations of critics and others. The author's intentions do not determine our understanding of his work because our aesthetic interest focusses upon the meanings which legitimately and coherently the work will sustain (Davies 1982, p.3).

As a value maximiser, Davies places a premium on aesthetically rewarding interpretations and argues that because art is a complex object there is no reason to treat the artist's stated intentions as anything more than recommendations as to the interpretation of the work. Aesthetic interest is therefore different to general conversational utterance because aesthetic interest can incorporate a range of perspectives that are seemingly supported by the work. However, Davies argument does not sufficiently demonstrate why art, even if it is a complex object, should be understood any differently to any other product of intentional human action. For instance,

many of our utterances in general conversation are layered with complexity such as irony, nuance, inside jokes and cultural references. All of these devices require an appreciation of the speaker's intentions in order to form an appropriate interpretation. Whether someone is being disingenuous or serious, whether they were referring to an inside joke or not, these questions can only be understood if we establish what the speaker intended to convey. The same applies for certain actions or gestures such as hand signals, knowing smiles or nods of the head. All of these might be intended to convey subtle and complex meanings to those who see them but in each case the meaning is logically tied to the intentions of the person performing the action. Art is just another product of human action like any other. All of the devices present in conversation, which require consideration of the speaker's intentions, are also present in literature and various other forms of art. For instance, many authors use irony to put across a particular meaning or emphasise a particular point and the performing arts use gestures to convey meanings. In fact, in his earliest publication titled *The Expression of Emotion in Music*, Davies (1980) argues that there is a resemblance between physical gesture and music for the purposes of interpretation but then later denies the conversational model, which seems like a logical extension. Davies does not offer sufficient reasons for us to suppose that these devices should be treated differently just because they appear in the domain of aesthetics.

> Interpretations must explain texts as they are […]. To fail to recognize this constraint is to ignore the value that art affords of perceiving through another's eyes, and to deny the artist a fair share of the credit for his creative act […]. It denies the audience a challenge to their cognitive powers, the answer to which can be a source of aesthetic pleasure. […] On the other side, to restrict interpretations to the maximization of values explicitly intended by artists is to deprive some contemporary audiences of richer aesthetic experience. (Goldman 1990, p.213)

In a slightly different way to Davies, Goldman is arguing that artworks are perceived differently by different audiences and to limit the number of possible interpretations in some arbitrary way, would be to deny the audience the challenge of interpreting the artwork themselves. However, Goldman also offers no real reason to suppose that artworks should be interpreted differently to other products of human action beyond the fact that it denies the audience some arbitrary challenge or aesthetic pleasure. Such objections are surely constrained by common sense in any other domain of discourse. If someone writes a letter to a friend, which expresses several ambiguous racist sentiments and it transpires that it was intended to be racist, then an appropriate interpretation of that letter would be to say it is racist. It would be curious to object that such an interpretation denies the reader the challenge of interpretations or the possibility of aesthetic pressure based on some other possible interpretation which maximises the value of

the letter. Sometimes people say and do unpleasant things and we should be able to say that these actions or the products of these actions are totally unacceptable. The same applies to works of art which express racist undertones, such as the character Apu in *The Simpsons* that I have already looked at in this thesis. I have argued that Apu's name, his job, the actor who voices him and the storylines he is involved in, all contribute to a forming the view that Apu is a racist character and this speaks to an unconscious bias held by Matt Groening against the South Asian community in America. However, philosophers such as Goldman and Davies are almost committed to the view that by calling this out for what it is, we are somehow denying the public the opportunity to derive some aesthetic pleasure from the character and the show. Even if that is so, I think that morally speaking we have a duty to identify racist or prejudicial meanings found in works of art and denounce them so that we might stand in solidarity with minorities. This seems to be "explaining texts as they are" (Goldman 1990, p.213) much more than Goldman's value maximisation approach to interpreting works.

Although I do believe that the conversational model is the appropriate way to understand creative works, I also do not think an entrenched commitment to the conversational metaphor is necessary to make a more general point about the goals of interpretation. It is not just in conversation that we try to establish the actual intentions of an agent in order to understand the meaning behind their words, but rather in all forms of human action and the fruits of our labour. If someone is talking to themselves and does not think anyone is watching the meanings of their words will still be constrained by their actual intentions, if someone dances alone in a room we should still say that the meaning behind their dancing is constrained by their actual intentions even if no one is there to share their happiness. Art does not have to be a metaphor for conversation necessarily in order to be a product of human action interpreted like any other. This undermines the notion that, should the metaphor between conversations and creative works collapse, the intentionalist position would be under threat. Conversation is just one in a range of human actions that are to be interpreted according to the actual intentions of the agent performing them. Furthermore, there is still a distinct sense in both the work of both Goldman and Davies that the intentions of the artist are some arbitrary additional component, not required for the practice of interpretation. However, this is just not true. Intentions are inexorably linked to actions, as I have discussed at length in Chapter One, and artmaking is an action like any other. Philosophers who endorse anti-intentionalist or value maximising positions such as Davies and Goldman have not done enough to argue that artmaking is different and the burden of proof lies firmly with them.

Finally, objection three relates to the multiple authorship view. In film studies the multiple authorship thesis states that there are multiple authors for most films (Gaut 1997, Livingston

1997, Sellors 2007). This contemporary view has formed as a critique of the single authorship thesis which claims that there is one author for each film and this author is normally considered to be the director. A prominent defence of the multiple authorship thesis is that the intentions of those involved in making a film, such as the producers, directors, screenwriters and actors, are regularly in conflict and this seems to "challenge the notion of films having a single author" (Hudson Hick 2014, p.147). In my work so far, I have defended a moderate version of intentionalism and the single interpretation thesis with respect to the interpretation of creative works, and so one might assume that I am logically committed to the single authorship view by extension. The concern that might motivate this commitment would be that if multiple intentions are equally admissible then there could be a situation where contradictory interpretations of a given work are held in conjunction. For instance, if the intentions of the director are in conflict with the writer or the actors then we might have to adopt a pluralist approach in order to account for all of them. However, I would argue that the multiple authorship thesis is compatible with the single interpretation thesis. It seems reasonable that a modest intentionalist position such as mine should acknowledge that multiple intentions are involved in making a film, but this might simply point to a very complex and multifaceted single interpretation, rather than the admission that multiple interpretations are required to explain the work. These cases should be treated in a similar way to those cases where a single author has multiple intentions as the work develops.

In keeping with my methods so far, I will first outline the definition of an author, as it is my belief that clarity on this issue cannot be achieved without the correct definitions in place. Livingston defines a film author as an "agent or [agents] who intentionally makes a cinematic utterance; where cinematic utterance [is equal too] an action the intended function of which is to make manifest or communicate some attitudes by means of the production of an apparently moving image projected on a screen or other surface" (Livingston 1997, p. 141). Sellors (2007) has since improved on this slightly by saying that a "filmic author [is] the agent or agents who intentionally token(s) a filmic utterance" (Sellors 2007, p.266). In this context a token is an action which intends to communicate a particular attitude in a film. To complete this definition, we probably need to add the expression of properties that do not necessarily count as explicitly communicative such as "beauty, vibrancy, and aesthetic unity" (Gaut 1997, p. 171, fn. 34) to the remit of tokens.

On the basis that this definition is sufficient, it follows that more than one person can author the same utterance if and only if they intend the utterance to communicate or manifest the same aesthetic characteristics and attributes. However, there are sometimes contradictions between the intentions of authors, this contradiction is especially prevalent in cases where multiple

authors are trying to achieve different goals in their depiction of a creative work. One famous example is the film *Do the Right Thing*, a 1989 American comedy drama, which was written and directed by Spike Lee. The film explores racial tensions in a Brooklyn neighbourhood, which ultimately leads to violence. The protagonist is a character called Sal and as director Lee intended him to be racist but the actor who played the role (Danny Aiello) didn't like this approach and instead chose to portray the character as not racist. Both Gaut (1997) and Sellors (2007) claim the single author theory cannot offer a satisfactory explanation for these kinds of cases. They argue that we should defer to the multiple authorship theory and conclude that since the director intended Sal to be one thing and the actor intended him to be another, Sal is both a racist and non-racist character in the film. Sellors argues that attributing this paradoxical interpretation only to Lee for instance, is unfair and not "a historically responsive position" (Sellors 2007, p. 268). Instead he suggests we invoke the multiple authorship view in order to explain how these interpretations interact. I agree with Sellors that the multiple authorship view offers the best explanation, as it allows us to appreciate that many intentions were involved in the creation and development of the work. However, this might challenge the single interpretation view I have defended earlier in the chapter, specifically in cases where the various intentions involved in authoring the work are directly in conflict and the intentions are held together as part of a single conjoined interpretation. In other words, my new single interpretation formed of the views of multiple authors could be accused of containing both p and ¬p simultaneously. This is not an issue for the pluralist, who believes that multiple conflicting interpretations of a given work can be true simultaneously, but it might potentially threaten the monist who should not concede that Sal is both racist and non-racist at the same time. In response, I would argue simply that it's not paradoxical to say of someone or some character that they are racist in one respect, but not in other respects; or in one set of circumstances but not in another. This negates the issue by conceding that the character is racist but not in all aspects of his portrayal. However, the character cannot be both racist and non-racist in the *same* aspect of his portrayal.

In this way racism is not a totalistic concept. Blum (2011) explored this notion in his analysis of the American drama film *Crash* (2004). The film follows a group of strangers struggling with racism in Los Angeles. Multiple storylines explore issues such as racial prejudice and stereotyping while the film as a whole, attempts to convey the message that everyone is racist. However, Blum argues that "[b]y including so many different forms and modes of personal racism, involving so many different racial and ethnic groups, *Crash* somewhat leaves the viewer with the false impression that they are all of equivalent moral seriousness" (Blum 2011, p.191). Ultimately racism is not a totalistic concept and in many cases certain characters or elements in a film can be racist while others are not.

5.5 Conclusion

The aim of an interpretation should be to understand the meaning behind a work. The meaning of a work is logically tied to the intention of the artist. Therefore the primary goal of an interpretation should be to recover the intentions of the artist from the content of the work and any available information. When new information becomes available this will change which interpretations are admissible or reasonable as well as potentially affecting the interpretation we deem to be correct should the evidence turn out to be definitive or decisive. There are also unconscious and natural meanings to be found in a work and these are also inexorably linked to intentional action and the choices made by the artist in the work. A single, true and comprehensive interpretation should aim to unify all these aspects of meaning where relevant and compatible. In this chapter I have argued that there is a difference between acceptable or admissible interpretations and true or correct interpretations. In my view acceptable interpretations are those that offer a reasonable or plausible account of the intended, natural or unconscious meanings in the work given the available evidence. There could be many contradictory and diverging acceptable interpretations but there cannot be multiple contradictory correct interpretations. Certain evidence might turn out to be crucial in deciding which interpretations are correct such as pronouncements of intent made by the artist or contextual evidence that rules out other plausible interpretations diachronically. Elsewhere in this thesis I have argued as much in my defence of moderate actual intentionalism, however many philosophers will consider different criteria definitive or admissible in the search for interpretive truth. For the sake of diverse, rich philosophical discussion we should be encouraged when many different acceptable interpretations are brought to bear on any given work. However, we must not make the mistake of conflating this with the view that there can be several correct conflicting interpretations. The difficulty of using reasonableness or plausibility as criteria for acceptability is that it is difficult to define the contours of reasonableness. It is difficult to say what constitutes a reasonable interpretation without specific stated guidelines. I have given examples of interpretations that are clearly reasonable, given the content of the work and the available evidence, and those that clearly are not. I do not believe that I need to demonstrate exactly where the line is drawn in order to show that the line exists. However, I do not believe this threatens the notion that there are correct interpretations and that these correct interpretations can be brought together to form a single, comprehensive interpretation.

Conclusion

This thesis has aimed to show that intentionalist theories, widely adopted within the analytic literature, are compatible with elements of the so-called deep interpretations, more commonly associated with the continental hermeneutical approaches, especially those which focus on the unconscious features of the work. Despite what Carroll, Danto and others have suggested, I argue that we can integrate elements of symptomatic interpretations, which often seek to analyse the unconscious processes involved in artmaking, with the more mainstream view that intentions are relevant to the interpretation of creative works. All we need to do is draw out the salient points and then expose them to the rigorous analysis of the analytic method. When this process is complete we can see that it is reasonable to discuss both natural and unconscious theories of meaning in relation to the interpretation of creative works.

In summary my argument is structured as follows. Intentions, both conscious and unconscious are relevant to the interpretation of creative works. Discerning which interpretation is correct requires appealing to all epistemically relevant information, including private pronouncements made by the artist. Many arguments in the debate about the relevance of intention to the interpretation of creative works are predicated upon faulty assumptions about the nature of intentions. Whilst intentions do not exist as such, in the sense, they are not tangible objects or mental states, there are real matters of fact regarding what someone intends to do. When we take the time to properly establish what constitutes an intentional action we realise that it is an action that has a reason-based explanation and one for which a certain application of the question 'Why?' applies. The question is asking, broadly speaking, why an agent undertook a particular action. It does not make sense to ask the plant why it grows, because this involves a purely causal process. Similarly, if we ask an agent why she fell over we can expect a causal explanation relating to a slippery surface or a lack of concentration, rather than a reason-based explanation. However, if we ask an agent why she went for a walk, she might report that it was a nice day and she wanted some fresh air. This response constitutes a reason-based explanation for an action. Unconscious intentional actions also have a reason-based explanation and these reasons are unconscious beliefs, which often take the form of repressed desires, implicit bias or stereotyping. Unconscious beliefs are beliefs which inform my actions and colour my judgements but I am unwilling to admit, either to myself or to others, that I believe them (Bennett & Hacker 2003). We can recover unconscious intentions from creative works by appealing to any available information which gives us an insight into the artist's implicit attitudes or unconscious bias.

I take the view that there is a single correct interpretation for any given work and therefore in cases where multiple interpretations could be applied, all correct interpretations of a given work must be compatible such that they can be joined into a single correct interpretation. As a consequence, for any instances where the unconscious interpretation of the work conflicts with the pronouncements of intent made by the artist, we must establish which reason-based account gives a more compelling explanation. This might be where we look to preference one criterion of intention over another.

In Chapter One I set out to find a working definition of intentional action. I argued generally that philosophical theories are often undermined by a failure to properly define key terminology. For instance, a number of philosophers especially in the United States such as Patricia Churchland and Daniel Dennett have committed themselves to the slightly eliminative propositions of neuroscience. Other philosophers – of which I am one – have become sceptical about the conceptual frameworks that inform cognitive neuroscience. The fundamental disagreement is not between two professions or disciplines, it is between two different modes of thought. Neuroscientists are primarily concerned with pursuing empirical questions, which take the form of testable propositions that can be falsified or verified. When we do these kinds of experiments neuroscientists often presuppose what we mean when we talk about intentions and concepts of voluntary action. If there is a lack of clarity or a case of mistaken identity with regards to the definition of these concepts, then that lack of clarity will be present in the interpretation of the results or even the design of the experiments. For instance, much work has been done in the field of voluntary movement. The conceptual framework that supports these experiments presupposes that to make a voluntary movement is to perform an act of willing, which then causes the movement. This presupposition is a misconception about the nature of intentional action. Every action I undertake when painting a picture, such as getting comfortable at my seat, washing my brushes, dipping the brushes in the paint, tilting my head to look at the canvas, raising my arm and beginning to paint, are intentional actions but they are not all preceded by individual acts of intending. If intending or willing is an action in the way that painting or writing is an action then we find ourselves subject to an infinite logical regression, because something must then initiate the intending.

> Doubtless I was trying to say: I can't will willing; that is, it makes sense to speak of willing [the] willing. "Willing" is not the name of an action; and so not the name of any voluntary action either. (Wittgenstein 1953, §613)

Those philosophers and neuroscientists who advocate for this version of intentions as mental acts, are committed to a view where individual acts of will precede all intentional actions. I

have explained in Chapter One why I believe this picture is so attractive. It seems quite natural to say that when an artist *wants* to paint a work she has a picture of that work in her mind. The temptation is to assume that this prior mental image somehow caused the artist to paint the picture. However, this treats the mental image as an object of desire and to make sense of that desire as a cause of the intentional action to paint requires that the object must already exist in the mind of the artist. When we play out this train of thought we end up drawing a sharp division between mind and body in order to facilitate this piece of seventeenth century metaphysics, which is a highly dubious position for the purposes of twenty-first century philosophy. Many contemporary philosophers have offered similar accounts, where intentions are understood as either mental states or mental phenomena which cause actions. In many ways these accounts are guilty of searching for what Gilbert Ryle would have called the *Ghost in the Machine* (Ryle 1949). In Chapter One I explored many of these accounts, beginning with Livingston's view that intentions are mental states which have two parts: an executive attitude directed towards a plan of action. This theory was informed by thinkers such as Mele (1992) and Bratman (1987). Bratman rejected reductive models of intention which aim to reduce intention to beliefs, desires or some combination of these because he says they are too restrictive. However, Davidson (1963) defends a reductive picture of intention. In his early work Davidson argues that an intention is not a mental state but rather a description of what an agent is doing expressed in terms of a primary reason. In his view an agent acts for a particular reason because a desire-belief pair causes their action. However, in his later work he revises this position and concludes instead that certain types of intention must be mental states.

Wimsatt and Beardsley (1946) had a similar conception of intentional action when they wrote their critique of intentionalist theories. They treated intentions as a plan or design in the artist's mind prior to the construction of an artwork. As a consequence, they treated intentions as separate entities, bracketed away from the content of the work. Anti-intentionalists such as Wimsatt and Beardsley argue that intentions are an arbitrary consideration because there is no reason to interpret the work and the intentions when we could just interpret the content of the work. However, the connection between intentions and the content of the work is anything but arbitrary. In fact, they are inexorably linked and so this argument is misleading. The picture Wimsatt and Beardsley present suggests that intentions can be separated from the work because they are separate entities, which is misguided.

Having looked at some more modern conceptions of intention I return to the work of Anscombe and Wittgenstein to offer a critique of this more contemporary work. Although many of these contemporary theories were influenced by the linguistic tradition they seem to have overlooked many of the main arguments against intention as a mental state or mental phenomenon. If we

want to understand intentions we have to look at the various ways the word is deployed in our language. Intentions for the future refer to that which I may or may not undertake going forward, these are different from intentions in action which are actions performed for reasons. An intentional action is an action with a reason-based explanation as opposed to an unintentional or mechanical event that has a causal-based explanation. Each of these demands a different sort of answers to the 'Why?' as Anscombe explains in her work and I have already briefly outlined above. For instance, the question "why did the artist paint those shapes in those colours?" demands a different sort of answer to the question "why did the plant grow?" The former demands a reason-based explanation, whereas the latter requires a causal-based explanation such as photosynthesis. The purpose of Chapter One then is primarily to set up a working definition of intentional action and to challenge some misconceptions about intentions in the contemporary philosophical literature.

In Chapter Two I discuss the nature of interpretation and I aim to establish the kinds of meaning available for interpretation in creative works. Philosophers such as Grice and Taylor have claimed that there are essentially two types of meaning available for interpretation; natural meaning and non-natural meaning. Natural meaning refers to the kind of meaning we interpret from unintentional features of a work or action, for instance we say that smoke means fire or that the accidental snapping of a pencil in a clenched hand means anger. In contrast, non-natural meaning refers to the kind of meaning recoverable from intentional features of a work. For Taylor (2014) natural meaning is a category so broad that it also includes the Marxist and Freudian derived hermeneutical approaches often associated with symptomatic or deep interpretations. I have argued that this category does not in fact adequately capture the nuances in many of these theories, especially those that present parts of the work as parapraxes. A parapraxis, or a Freudian slip as it is commonly known, is a form of unconscious intentional action where an unconscious bias or subdued desire interferes with an action or train of thought. Unconscious beliefs and states can influence our decision-making and can form a reason-based explanation for our actions as well. These are instances of unconscious intention and therefore one might argue that theories incorporating these ideas belong in the category of non-natural meaning. However, the methods for retrieving and understanding these unconscious intentions seem to be more akin to the methods used to understand natural meaning. Both seem to require symptomatic interpretations where we are looking to go beyond the immediate, surface content of the work in search of some implicit meaning. Since unconscious meaning seems to have elements in common with both I suggested that it should sit as a category of its own between the natural and non-natural meaning. I give three examples in Chapter Two of unconscious meaning recovered from works. The first is a fairly conventional understanding of the unconscious in the form of Dalí's automatism. Dalí was a part of the Surrealist movement,

which often portrayed irrational, strange scenes and brought together curious creatures with ordinary objects. This style was seen as a way of expressing the unconscious mind of the artist in creative works. As part of this process Dalí experimented with a technique called automatism. Automatism aims to supress conscious control over the art-making process and allows the unconscious mind to come to the fore. Dalí tried to achieve a blank state where he was able to express the deepest recesses of his thought on the canvas.

The second example is from Matt Groening's American animated sitcom *The Simpsons*. I argue that the character Apu is an instance of racism because it deploys unfair and harmful stereotypes against the South Asian community in America. Groening has denied this accusation in public and whilst I do not believe his denial is disingenuous I do believe he harbours an implicit bias against certain ethnic groups. I revisit this example in Chapter Four in order to establish a thorough exposition of racist humour and I explain that whilst *The Simpsons* mocks various areas of American society, Apu is a clear case of punching down, rather than punching up and attacking established power structures.

The final example in this chapter comes from the work of Louise Giblin, a British sculpture best known for her Body-Casting Olympians project. One particular cast of note is that of Dame Kelly Holmes, which features twenty-five kilos of bronze carved out in beautiful, intricate detail. The cast starts around mid-thigh and ends at the shoulders. It depicts medals, horses, ancient buildings, the Union Jack and some other more ambiguous symbols. Even with these symbols carved out in detail none of the contours of the female form are lost beneath. In an interview with Giblin I asked her about her the work and she said that she intended to immortalise the female form in peak physical condition. She also said that she felt the cast was like armour for the athlete, which symbolised a kind of protection against their insecurities. Whilst exhibiting her work a member of the audience came to speak to her and said they had seen something similar in ancient Egyptian artworks. Suddenly Giblin remembers that she had a fascination with Egyptian artwork as a child and her father used to take her to museums regularly. She acknowledged almost immediately the similarity and accepts that her work alludes to the Egyptian art that she was obsessed with in her youth. She also recalls that as a child she filled various sketch books with drawings inspired by these museum trips. After going back to find these books at her parents' house she noticed clear similarities between the Egyptian sarcophagus and her bronze casts. Giblin believes that due to her difficult relationship with her father, these feelings and memories were repressed but found their way out in her art.

In Chapter Three I present a defence of moderate actual intentionalism. As a school of thought, intentionalism covers a broad range of theories. Intentionalist philosophers agree that the

intentions of the artist are important criteria when interpreting creative works, however the extent to which these intentions are relevant varies depending on the kind of intentionalism each philosopher subscribes to. Absolute actual intentionalism claims that a work means what the author or artist intended it to mean, therefore the intentions of the artist are both a necessary and sufficient condition for meaning. In contrast, extreme actual intentionalism rejects the notion that the intentions of the artist are infallible, arguing instead that the meaning of the work is determined by the intentions of the artist unless these intentions do not seem to correspond with the range of possible meanings sustained by the work (Hirsch 1967). In this case the work is rendered meaningless. The school of thought that I defend is moderate actual intentionalism, which, as the name suggests, is the most moderate version of the actual intentionalist theory. Moderate actual intentionalists aim to establish the actual intentions of the artist insofar as they might reasonably be recognisable in the work. It also claims that the sort of intention that is meaning-shaping is only successful intention, therefore, in cases where the artist's stated intentions fail to correspond with the range of possible meanings found in the work, the meaning in the work is determined by convention plus context (Carroll 2001, Stecker 2003)

Often presented in opposition to moderate actual intentionalism is hypothetical intentionalism. Hypothetical intentionalism presents itself as a middle ground between anti-intentionalism and intentionalism, arguing that the meaning of a work is determined by the hypothesis made by an appropriately informed audience. The goal of interpretation for the hypothetical intentionalist is to form a hypothesis of the artist's intentions at the time of composition given the information publicly available to the audience (Levinson 1996). Fundamentally the difference between moderate actual intentionalism and hypothetical intentionalism has to do with what constitutes a warranted hypothesis and truth. One defining feature that separates the two theories is the admissibility of certain kinds of evidence such as private avowals of intent made by the artist. Hypothetical intentionalists argue that there is an implicit contract between the artist and the audience, which says it is unfair to ask the interpreter to possess private information about the artist. Moderate actual intentionalists such as myself respond that it would be remiss of interpreters to include potentially epistemically relevant information on these grounds.

In this chapter I look at some previous test cases used in this debate, focusing specifically on the examples from contemporary visual art put forward by Hans Maes (2010). As yet no decisive test case has been put forward to end the debate. After an exposition of the key ideas I offer two test cases of my own in support of moderate actual intentionalism. The first case study is taken from the works of British artist Matt Sharp. Sharp has Tourette's syndrome, which means he suffers with quite severe vocal and motor tics. For the most part Sharp's tics settle when he paints but occasionally they take hold while he is working. I show some

examples of Sharp's work in order to demonstrate that most of his paintings are beautifully intricate and controlled, mostly in the Post-Impressionist style. However, one work titled *Two Faced* is very different in both style and composition. This more abstract work contains two different distorted half faces, which meet in the middle at a dividing line. Over the top of these disturbing faces are aggressive, jet black lines which scorch the canvas. With the publicly available information and what we know about Sharp's distressing experience in care, the hypothetical intentionalist might well conclude that this painting aimed to portray his inner conflict and the perception of his dual personality due to the verbal and physical tics. In an interview with Sharp he tells me that this reading would not be adequate, since he was trying to draw a piece of work in the style of Picasso and his tics caused him to make the lines on the canvas. Whilst this example cannot directly serve as a defence of moderate actual intentionalism, because that would be to interpret unintentional features of the work as relevant to the interpretation, it does serve to debunk hypothetical intentionalism. In the absence of the private pronouncements of intent made by the artist, the hypothetical intentionalist would surely conclude that the scorched black lines on the canvas were intentional, which would in turn lead to a very different interpretation of the work. I argue that if the hypothetical intentionalist was aware of the private avowals of intent I uncovered during my interview with Sharp, then they would be deliberately excluding relevant information and would be forced to knowingly form an incorrect interpretation as a consequence.

The second case study I put forward is a literary one and it focuses on competing interpretations of Richard Yates's novel *Revolutionary Road*. This novel is often interpreted as an anti-suburban novel but later Yates rejected this interpretation in an interview. One of the main reasons to reject anti-intentionalism is because the content of the work alone is often indeterminate without the appropriate contextual understanding. Yates explains that his aim was to expose his protagonists as delusional and ordinary, rather than to attack suburban American life and alleviate them of responsibility. Both interpretations seemed to be supported by sufficient evidence to be plausible, but in this case, I argue that the pronouncements of intent made by the artist are definitive. Whether or not this interview is part of the publicly available information is of little relevance to the correctness of the interpretation. Whilst it is true that the examples I have put forward are not structurally different from previous examples offered by the likes of Stecker, Maes, Iseminger and Carroll, they do present new test cases and may therefore count as new evidence in the debate. Moreover, the level of detail with which I examine Richard Yates's work is uncommon for philosophical discussions of this sort. Such detailed analysis, I argue, allows us to really see how HI would lead to an anti-suburban interpretation and how, in light of Yates's statements, such an interpretation would appear

deeply problematic. In showing this, I believe I have made a substantively new contribution to the debate.

In Chapter Four I try to deal with an obvious question which arises in light of the work done in Chapters Two and Three, namely; what should we do when the unconscious interpretation conflicts with the stated intentions of the artist? In this chapter I argue that in these cases we should preference one criterion of intention over another, depending on which one offers us the most compelling explanation of the work. For instance, after close analysis of the evidence it might transpire that the unconscious states, implicit biases or repressed desires provide a more plausible reason-based explanation for the choices made in the work than the pronouncements of intent made by the artist. The example I revisit in order to illustrate this conflict is that of Apu in *The Simpsons*. I argue that whilst Matt Groening is adamant that he is not racist and his characterisation of Apu is not racist, the content of the work clearly demonstrates a bias against South Asian culture in America. In order to make this argument I first needed to give a thorough exposition of the definition of racism and of racist humour. It is certainly possible in my investigations that Groening also has too narrow a conception of racist humour and so he does not recognise that what he has produced is profoundly offensive to many South Asian Americans. As I have already said, I do not believe that Groening's pronouncements of intent are disingenuous but I do believe that his writing of the character Apu is riddled with unpleasant stereotypes from the length of his name and his catchphrase, to his profession and his religious beliefs. Whilst *The Simpsons* ridicules many areas of American society, there is a difference between making fun of a minority group and making fun of predominantly privileged white middle class America and oppressive corporate power structures.

In Chapter Five I explore the debate between monism and pluralism in order to establish that there should be a single, correct interpretation of any given work. Whilst moderate actual intentionalism seems to point in the direction of monism, it does not explicitly endorse the single interpretation thesis in all cases. The belief that there is a single correct interpretation for creative works is a fairly unpopular view both in the contemporary philosophical literature and the art world more generally. Initially, I give an exposition of the debate between pluralism and monism, examining the key points of departure. Critical pluralism is the view that creative works admit multiple, equally acceptable interpretations that may be wholly incompatible. As a consequence, pluralists usually assert that there can be many correct ways to interpret a work of art. In contrast, critical monism argues that any given work is susceptible to a single, comprehensive, complete and correct interpretation. Granted, pluralism seems to be a much more interesting thesis which promotes and empowers rival interpretations, whereas monism

staunchly defends the position that any instance of disagreement with respect to the interpretation of a creative work is the result of one or several interpretive errors.

In this chapter I argue that pluralism violates the logical principle of bivalence or law of non-contradiction, which states that something cannot be p and ¬p simultaneously. Pluralism would have us belief that an artwork can legitimately have two contradictory and correct meanings at any given time because art is somehow different to other meaning forming objects. I reject this notion and argue that art is still subject to the same logical rules that govern meaning shaping in conversation. I also argue that there is a difference between acceptability and correctness. The correctness of an interpretation is contingent upon warranted hypothesis and truth, whereas acceptability is dependent upon many other factors. An acceptable interpretation certainly does not need to be true but rather it needs to give a plausible explanation for the meaning a creative work. Since it is my view that our primary interpretive goal is to establish the meaning of a work and the work is logically tied to the intentions of the artist, I argue that the correct interpretation is the one that is consonant with the intentions of the artist, either conscious or unconscious, but might also account for any natural meanings recovered from the work which might be reconcilable or compatible with this single correct interpretation. Acceptable interpretations are those which offer a reasonable or plausible account of the intended, natural or unconscious meanings in the work given the available evidence. Whilst I concede that I cannot outline the exact contours of the criteria for acceptability, I have given examples of interpretations that are clearly acceptable and those that are clearly not in order to show that the line exists. As new information becomes available this affects both the acceptability and the correctness of any given interpretation. Whilst there can be multiple contradictory acceptable interpretations there can only be one single correct interpretation and where there are multiple correct interpretations they must be compatible and conjoinable into this overarching, single correct interpretation. The single interpretation might be complex, such as the interpretation of the film *Do the Right Thing*, where the actor intended the character Sal to be portrayed one way and the director another. Instances like these demonstrate how the single interpretation thesis can be incredibly versatile, by acknowledging that interpretations can be multi-layered or ambiguous in cases where multiple authors share different visions for the work.

Whilst it is not in the scope of this thesis to explore all the various implications my arguments might have for other areas of discourse, it is important to acknowledge these implications for the sake of ensuring consistency and possible future areas of research. If it turns out that my claims are not consistent then caveats or revisions would need to be applied.

One area where my claims about meaning will undoubtedly be relevant is the political sphere. I have already mentioned the Black Lives Matter movement in this thesis, but to briefly recapitulate, they are a decentralised political movement, whose initial aims were to protest against, and raise awareness of, police brutality and incidents of violence against black people. Since then it has set up a more general aim to bring an end to systemic racism and white supremacy. The movement believes that part of fulfilling that goal involves the removal of statues and symbols which they feel represent or embody racism. For instance, in June 2020 protestors in Washington D.C. tore down a statue of Andrew Jackson because they did not feel that it was appropriate to have a former slaver and tyrant immortalised and on display in the nation's capital. The confederacy opposed the abolition of slavery and prior to the American civil war instituted racist policies, including the segregation and oppression of black people. Jackson himself was a tyrant, a slaver and signed into law racist policies such as the Indian Removal Act of 1830. This act authorised him to grant Indian owned lands west of the Mississippi to white landowners, a relocation policy that many Native Americans rightly resisted. The Black Lives Matter movement then set their sights on other targets such as Christopher Columbus who, despite being hailed as a great explorer and navigator, is considered by many to be simply another coloniser who was responsible for the genocide of many Native American people.

This trend then reached Europe and soon statues were being torn down in the United Kingdom as well. The statue of slave trader Edward Colston was removed in Bristol (and briefly replaced with a statue of a Black Lives Matter protester named Jen Reid). Colston was a philanthropist and Tory party member who was associated with the Transatlantic slave trade during the late seventeenth century. Colston made his fortune from trafficking men, women and children in their thousands from Africa to the Americas, a fortune that Bristol was founded on. The statue itself was created in 1895 by an Irish sculptor named John Cassidy and originally stood around two and a half metres tall cast out of bronze. The statue depicts Colston in a long wig and velvet coat and it is stood on a high plinth. The plaque on the plinth pays tribute to Colston as a virtuous and wise son of Bristol.

On the basis that the Abolition of the Slave Trade act was signed into British law in 1807 by King George III, one would have to assume that the intention behind this statue was not to immortalise or recognise Colston for his success as a Slave Trader but rather to acknowledge that he was a man who played an integral role in development of Bristol as a flourishing city by bequeathing his wealth to charities. However, many critics have said that these statues are racist monuments and should be removed because of what they represent. Regardless of whether the sculptor intended to create a racist symbol, this interpretation of Cassidy's work is

appropriate in light of the publicly available information about Colston and his business interests. This raises two questions then: 1) when is it appropriate to assign meanings to creative works which were not intended by the artist? And 2) can the meaning of a creative work change with the context or epoch in which it is being interpreted? This question arises because it could, hypothetically, be the case that if meanings can change in the time and context they are received, then the statue was not racist at the time of composition but has subsequently become a racist work given a shift in cultural norms.

One response to question 1) might be to suggest this racism is a form of natural meaning, which I have already argued in Chapter Two can be recovered from creative works. It does not qualify as a direct case of unconscious intention in the same way that Apu does in *The Simpsons* because we have no clear evidence to suggest that the statue pays tribute to his exploits as a slaver directly. Whereas there seems to be clear evidence in the case of Apu through his surname, his job, the actor who voices him and the storyline of his character that a direct attempt has been made to stereotype the South Asian community in America. Instead, we might argue that the statue contains racist undertones as a form of natural meaning insofar as it shows a general disregard for the offense it might have caused racial minorities in Bristol at that time. This tells us about the prevailing wisdom at the time and the lack of empathy for those who suffered because of the Atlantic Slave trade. On this basis we might be able to draw a racist interpretation of the statue despite the fact that it was not necessarily intended by the artist.

Alternatively, a moderate actual intentionalist such as myself could respond that there was a clear effort made here to create a racist monument, which speaks directly to the meaning of the piece. If pronouncements of intent were presented which suggested otherwise and a significant case could be made against these pronouncements then the meaning would default to conventions anyway. The conventional meanings would take into account all of the information above and find that the work contained racist undertones.

One reply might be that whilst these are interesting facts about the work and about the artist they do not necessarily relate to the meaning or interpretation of the work itself. However, here I have to disagree. Forming an interpretation that claims a statue is racist relates directly to the meaning of the work. Facts about the work might be that it was made in the late 19th century or that it is made out of bronze, but to argue that it is racist is to form an interpretation of the object which posits a hypothesis about its meaning from a particular point of view.

In response to 2) I would argue that meanings do not change with time and context, even if what is deemed to be acceptable does. These are two very different things. For instance, the

meaning of a work can stay the same whilst becoming increasingly unacceptable over time as the standards of political correctness change. One example of this would be the golliwog, which was a doll-like character created by author Florence Kate Upton in the late 19th century. The golliwog has black skin, thick red lips and dark frizzy hair. They are usually depicted in minstrel attire and authors such as Enid Blyton have since portrayed these golliwogs as badly behaved or mischievous. As a direct result, the names "golliwog" and "wog" became pejorative terms to describe black people.

These dolls would not have been made now and whilst there is evidence to suggest that Upton did not intend to create a racist character because she claims to have been "frightened [to] read the fearsome etymology some deep, dark minds can read in his name" (Davis 1992, p.11), what we can say categorically is that it would not be acceptable to create such a character in contemporary culture today. I would argue that this depiction was always racist because it depicts a person with black skin doing bad or stupid things and then was deployed as an anti-black caricature in various literature worldwide. It was always racist but became less acceptable over time as the cultural paradigm shifted towards equal rights. Therefore, the meaning stayed constant whilst the standards for acceptability changed.

In addition to the general political questions which arise, cultural appropriation has become a central focus of discussion in aesthetics recently (Young 2021, Thomas 2021, Haynes 2021) and my arguments surrounding racism and interpretive monism will almost certainly be relevant here. In general terms, cultural appropriation can be understood as the unacknowledged or inappropriate adoption of some cultural elements by another culture. This becomes particularly problematic when members of a dominant culture are seen to appropriate from minority or oppressed cultures and groups. Cultural appropriation has been closely linked to aesthetics because many of the world's most famous works through the course of art history have been the result of it. The Romans appropriated Greek culture, Picasso and Matisse appropriated African art without a genuine love for the artefacts themselves and Dana Schutz was accused of cultural appropriation of black culture when she painted *Open Casket* in 2016. It is true that writers are and should be free to explore themes and draw from cultures which are not their own, however, there are questions surrounding accountability and the ways in which these cultural elements should be depicted. Many artists adopt and are inspired by aspects of other cultures all the time, but the problem arises when there is an unequal cultural exchange. In other words, there should not be a power imbalance where dominant cultures are taking elements from oppressed and minority cultures out of context or profiting from them in some way.

Another topic which would be of interest in light of my thesis is the interpretation of religious literature and holy books. Religious extremism saw a sharp rise in the early twenty-first century as continued Western Imperialism in the Middle East brought with it a new wave of Islamic fundamentalism. Our interventions in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria left behind them chaos which paved the way for the Sunni jihadist Islamic State of Iraq and Syria. Whilst much of this chaos can be attributed to western intervention, Islam has become the conduit for rebellion against what these countries perceive to be a secular disturbance to their cultural values. In other words, Islam is being used as the vehicle to rally and unify people to fight back against Western oppression. This has led New Atheist philosophers such as Sam Harris to argue that the Qur'an contains passages which are immoral and openly advocate violence against non-Muslims. Harris claims that the "the doctrine of Islam, at this point in history, represents a unique danger to all of us" (Harris 2006, p.28). However, the word "Islam" means peace and submission, and the majority of Muslims argue that the fundamentalists among them have misinterpreted the Qur'an. For instance, the concept of jihad or struggle has caused a flurry of debate. There are three types of jihad in Islam: The greater jihads involve a struggle against the devil and the struggle against oneself, where the lesser jihad is the struggle against an open enemy who is seen as a threat to the religion. Muslim fundamentalists have claimed that jihad gives them the right to commit terrorist acts in defence of their religion, where other scholars and moderate Muslims have argued that jihad can never be used to justify terrorism. These are directly conflicting interpretations of central passages in the Qur'an.

Additionally, America has seen a rise in Christian fundamentalism through groups such as the Westboro Baptist Church, a hyper-Calvinist hate group now infamous for picketing the funerals of soldiers as well as producing anti-Semitic and homophobic propaganda. Furthermore, there are many American schools that deliver the Accelerated Christian Education (ACE) programme, which offers a Bible-based curriculum and, by its own admission, is "non-evolutionary in its approach and content" (Christian Education n.d.). These curriculums treat the Bible as a source of scientific truth as well as spiritual guidance.

In theological discourse, there are many different approaches to Biblical interpretation just as there are with artistic interpretation. The primary objective of Biblical hermeneutics is to understand the values and truths conveyed through scripture in the Bible. There are three main types of Biblical hermeneutics: Literal, allegorical and moral.

Literal interpretations aim to understand the text using rules of syntax and grammar alone. This approach is also known as *sola scriptura*, which means "by scripture alone" and is adopted by some Protestant Christian denominations on the basis that the Bible is the sole authority on

matters of doctrine. In Biblical hermeneutics the literal interpretation is also taken to be synonymous with the intentional meaning of the author(s), which presents a slight departure from the standard intentionalist positions in aesthetic interpretation. For instance, it is not always clear simply by attending to the rules of grammar that we have understood the intentions of the author at all. This approach was championed by Eusebius Hieronymus, a fourth century scholar and monastic leader who criticised the allegorical method for being too excessive.

As the name suggests, allegorical hermeneutical approaches claim that Biblical narratives are allegories, which have a deeper meaning beyond the surface reading of the text. Whilst the most popular examples of allegory in the Bible are the parables of Jesus, there are also typological interpretations which present Old Testament figures as warnings for what is to come. For instance, the story of Jonah and the whale involves a man who sacrifices himself in the belly of a whale for three days to save others on his ship, which bears a striking similarity to the resurrection of Christ.

Moral interpretations are similar to allegorical interpretations but they try to establish general principles by which they can uncover moral truths in the Bible. For instance, the Epistle of Barnabus interprets the dietary laws in Leviticus not as recommendations against eating certain animals, but actually as a warning to avoid the vices associated with certain animals. There are other types of interpretation such as analogical and Mariological but these positions are not as well represented in the literature.

Were we to apply the principles of aesthetic interpretation I have advocated for in this thesis to the practice of Biblical interpretation, we could say that the correct interpretation of the Bible is the one that is consonant with the intentions of the author(s) insofar as they can be recovered using the available information and attending to the texts. Furthermore, there are instances of natural meaning we can find in the text which reveal truths about the time and the authors unintentionally through the text. Additionally, there might be unconscious intentional meanings to be recovered from religious texts as well. I have argued throughout this thesis that we should adopt the same methods when we interpret creative works as we do when we interpret other objects or events. Therefore, the same should apply to Biblical texts and the correct interpretation of the text is the one that is consonant with the intentions of the author(s). It should be pointed out that in many cases the approaches to Biblical hermeneutics outlined above are not mutually exclusive. For instance, it could be the case that the intention of the author was to produce an allegorical meaning or second level of reference beneath the surface of the text. However, in my view, this allegory would only be the correct interpretation were it to be intended by the author.

In truth, each of these areas deserves a thesis of its own but my research certainly has implications here. Understanding scripture properly has been a key tool in deradicalizing religious extremism, particularly in Islam (Kamolnick 2012) and establishing definitively whether or not statues of slave traders are racist monuments is an important issue in light of recent events.

In conclusion, the aim of this dissertation has been to formulate a credible defence of moderate actual intentionalism, based on a cogent definition of intentions and to demonstrate how this might be compatible with the theory that we can recover unconscious intentions from creative works. I have tried to show that these ideas can still be taken together to endorse a version of the single interpretation thesis, by establishing which interpretation provides the most plausible explanation for the meaning of the work based on all the available evidence. I hope to have shown that ideas often found in the continental tradition can be discussed in analytic terms. I also hope I have made an important contribution to the ongoing debate surrounding intentionalism and the interpretation of art.

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