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How valuable is the notion of artist's intentions in the interpretation of painting?

by

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I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree.

Signature

Summary

In this project I examine the value of artistic intentions in the interpretation of painting. Broadly, my main question is: Are artist's intentions valuable in the interpretation of painting and to what degree do they determine a painting's meaning? To approach this question, I analyse the notion of intention based on G. E. M. Anscombe's view and juxtapose the execution and interpretation of everyday actions with the execution and interpretation of actions in art making. In the development of the notion of intention I propose that artists are surrounded by other states too - usually conceived by commentators to be equal to intention - which are essential to consider.

A second issue concerns the appearance of intentions in painting and to what degree the viewer can grasp them based on appearance. This is discussed along with actual intentionalism as this assumes that intentions are apparent in painting. I will dispute this assumption by claiming that art making is not a mere transferring of intentions on a two-dimensional surface and thus interpreting painting does not (only) involve recognition of intentions. This is also explored with a discussion about the artist's success and the value of painting. Further, I investigate what we mean by 'interpreting painting'. I make the distinction between 'knowing' and 'understanding' an artist's intentions and suggest that interpretation of painting does not always include understanding of artistic intentions but involves a special kind of understanding.

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Introduction

Confronted with a painting the viewer tends to desire to interpret what she looks at. Interpretation can be a multifarious process and its examination raises crucial questions and issues. On the one hand, the intentionalist theory claims that the viewer needs to be aware of the artist's intentions in order to reach a correct interpretation of a work of art and that in the work the artists' intentions are available for the viewer to find. On the other hand, anti-intentionalists claim that the work of art is public and autonomous and therefore independent of the artist's intentions. In this case, the viewer need not look for intentions, but needs to get familiar with the context and conventions of the work's creation.

In this project, my strategy is to show that the intentionalist position does not provide an adequate account of art interpretation. I begin by examining certain questions pertaining to the interpretation of painting and suggest an account that encompasses both a meaningful and emotional understanding. I then examine intentionalist theories -moderate, extreme and hypothetical intentionalism - as well as anti-intentionalism, and identify some difficulties in fully accepting them. I will not address the weaknesses of hypothetical intentionalism and anti-intentionalism except in passing; the reason I will present them is just to say that there are different kinds of intentionalism. This research is confined to the examination of the interpretation of only one genre of art, namely painting, but sometimes other genres, especially poetry, will be used as supportive examples (there is not as much literature on painting as on poetry). To clarify certain issues there is a detailed account of what an artist may do when she paints and what a viewer may do when she interprets. This

will eventually support the discussion of how valuable artist's intentions are in the process of the viewer's interpretation of painting.

To pursue this strategy, I hold the view that the interpretation of painting concerns the understanding and aesthetic sensing of painting as well as creativity on the part of the viewer. My main assumption is that intentionalism is based on system theory and that this tactic can be undiversified. Also, intentionalism is a theory of meaning and as such it excludes other inherent properties of the work which are part of aesthetic experience. I propose to espouse a pluralistic and multi-dimensional approach which is not only based on systematic meaning, but also on emotion, creativity and spontaneity. That is to say, an amalgamation of meaning encompassing the aesthetic and the ingenious involvement of the viewer will provide a richer and more rewarding interpretation.

CHAPTER 1

Issues pertaining to interpretation

In an attempt to present an account of what interpretation might be, one faces two crucial questions: (i) how do we interpret a painting (using what is meaningful) and (ii) what are the effects of interpreting a painting on the viewer. In approaching a response to the first question one can suggest that in order to interpret a painting the viewer uses perceptual abilities like seeing and that one engages in activities like reading titles, catalogues, critiques, having talks with curators, listening to the artist's talks or interviews, looking at the artist's diaries and reading about the artist's background. As regards the second question, in the practice of interpreting the viewer undergoes some mental and physical processes like imagining, understanding, enjoying or disliking, remembering, feeling beauty, awe or fear and so on. Also, she may be asking herself questions like what are the properties of this painting, what did the artist intend, is the painting beautiful? At that moment, three further questions also arise: what (i) aspects of painting and (ii) further information about it should be taken into account and (iii) to what extent do the artist's intentions determine the interpretation of painting. The aspects of painting comprise of its shape, form, colours, technique, artistic skills, media, content and subject. Information about it can be the title, criticism, the artist's intentions and catalogues. In addressing the third question there is a dominant theory involved: actual intentionalism. This constitutes the main focus of this work and will be further examined below.

Before presenting actual intentionalism, we will first examine the question of how do we interpret painting and provide a preliminary approach towards the question of what is it to interpret a painting, which will be eventually further developed throughout this work.

1. How do we interpret a painting?

Beyond the ability to see and perceive, the viewer uses other means too: engaging in activities like reading titles, critiques, books, the artist's biography, having talks with curators, listening to artist's talks or interviews, looking at the artist's diaries and catalogues. All of these provide the viewer with knowledge about a painting, its context and the artist's life or work in general. Cognitive abilities like imagination and creativity are also brought into play. In the process of seeing, the recognition of formal aspects like colours, forms and shapes – and therefore of the pictorial space – takes place. Imagination is employed as it endorses combinations of input in various ways, flexibility of thought, disengagement from reality, thinking about situations and experiences and their connection to the painting. In addition to that, creativity is an important aspect of interpretation because it enables the viewer to develop ideas, originality, divergent thinking, new approaches and spontaneous responses. These abilities and activities can be the primary tools that the viewer uses in order to interpret painting¹.

2. What is it to interpret a painting?

The word 'interpret' means to translate and it is close to the term 'hermeneutics'. This does not entail reducing interpretation to mere translation but rather implies a 'rendering'. I

¹ This is discussed with examples in chapter 6, sections 2 and 3.

suggest that interpretation is the possibility of discovering and experiencing something through the presence of the work; interpretation is a process where the viewer renders her relation with the painting in understanding and/or in aesthetic sensing. Let us call this act an act of synaesthesia. In this context, synaesthesia joins understanding and aesthetic sensing and can be a special kind of awareness and sensitivity which the painting evokes in the viewer; it makes the viewer alert to understanding and feeling. This proposes that a painting can be both meaningful and sensual. The canvas itself cannot be meaningful and sensual but the relation of the viewer with the painting can induce meaningfulness and sensuality. Meaningfulness can take place through understanding, and sensuality through aesthetic sensing.

By understanding I mean that the viewer conceptualizes what the painting reveals to her. The painting relates the viewer to reality because it shows her something about it, it alerts her and calls for her awareness about it through revelation. Understanding might be achieved by means of the drives of intelligence, imagination and creativity, as well as through knowledge. Intelligence, imagination and creativity may depend on the individual abilities of the viewer and the information she knows about the painting. As mentioned above, in interpreting painting, knowledge may come from reading titles, catalogues, critiques, having talks with curators, listening to artist's talks or interviews, looking at the artist's diaries, reading about the artist's background or finding out about the artist's intentions. Therefore, this kind of knowledge can sometimes assist interpretation. In later sections we explore in detail instances where this kind of knowledge assists interpretation and examples when it does not.

Aesthetic sensing can cause feelings, sensations, emotions and stimulate mood in certain ways. For instance, it can cause feelings of pleasure, irritation, awe, passivity, the sense of beauty or ugliness.² Aesthetic sensing is linked to sensuality which promotes an exploration of the painting through the senses. It is difficult to separate understanding from aesthetic sensing as sometimes one may help the other and they may happen at the same time. In effect, both of them constitute interpretation, sometimes individually and sometimes when combined. We will see how this can take place later.

3. What aspects of the work and information about it should be taken into consideration?

Noticing the formal and visual aspects of a painting constitute a necessary condition of interpretation. These aspects involve colour, composition, space, textures, pattern, mark, line, shape, form, value and space. They also include representational properties like for instance the property of representing a girl with an umbrella. Other aspects like size, materials, media, methods, techniques and their relations should also be taken into consideration. Reading titles, catalogues, critiques, having talks with curators, considering

² There is a long tradition of associating aesthetic experience with pleasure. A thorough investigation was undertaken by Kant in his *Critique of Judgment* where he claims that judgments of taste are based on responses of pleasure: for example, we think of beauty as pleasurable. The particularly close connection between judgments of beauty and the faculty of judgment is echoed in Kant's assertion that the feeling of pleasure in a beautiful object is felt in virtue of an exercise of judgment, namely reflecting judgment (1952 pp. 29-36). Reflecting judgment includes particulars under concepts which are already given. Judgment is not an independent faculty, it is governed by the principles of understanding and it is responsible for aesthetic judgments (p. 18). Aesthetic judgment for Kant is a judgment which is grounded on feeling, especially on the feeling of pleasure or displeasure (pp. 41-42). There are three kinds of aesthetic judgment: judgments of the agreeable, judgments of the beauty and judgments of the sublime. In addition to this, Kant contends that beauty is not a property of an artwork or natural phenomenon; it is rather a consciousness of pleasure which attends the 'free play' of imagination and understanding ('free play' manifests 'free lawfulness'); it might appear that we use reason to decide what is beautiful but the judgment is aesthetic, not logical (pp. 41-42). Lastly, a pure judgment of taste is subjective since it refers to the emotional response of the subject and it is based on appreciation of an object: it is a 'disinterested' pleasure because it is independent of the desire of the subject for the object (pp. 82-85).

the dates relevant to the work, the name of the artist, the country where the work was made, listening to artist's talks or interviews, looking at the artist's diaries, reading about the artist's background and biography, her artist's statement and stated intentions; all these are sources of potentially helpful information but they are not determinative and do not constitute a necessary condition for interpretation. I will argue that formal and visual aspects constitute the content of the painting, which is determined by the artist, and should be given significant consideration in interpretation. However, they should be considered in relation to the viewer, not the artist.

CHAPTER 2

Theories of Intentionalism

Below I give an overview of four versions of intentionalism: (i) moderate actual intentionalism, extreme actual intentionalism, (iii) hypothetical intentionalism and (iv) anti-intentionalism. To clarify the terminology in play here, the term ‘viewer’ is used in the text with reference to painting, whereas the term ‘reader’ is used to discuss literary fiction. The term ‘interpreter’ encompasses both viewer and reader. Also, for abbreviation reasons moderate actual intentionalism will be sometimes referred to as MAI, extreme actual intentionalism as EAI and work as painting.

Moderate Actual Intentionalism

Moderate actual intentionalism holds that in order for the viewer to understand the meaning of a work she has to have knowledge of at least some of the actual artist’s intentions.³ Interpretation takes place within the framework of the artist’s intentions and therefore in order for the viewer to interpret a work she can use the artist’s diaries, letters, notes, biographical information and personal statements as elements that help her identify artistic intentions and eventually reach the appropriate interpretation of a work (Livingston 1998, p. 835). Specifically, according to Livingston:

“Moderate intentionalism is the thesis that the *actual* maker(s)’ attitudes and doings are responsible for some of the a work’s content, and as such are a legitimate target of interpretive claims; more specifically, knowledge of some, but not all intentions is necessary to some, but not all valuable interpretive insights because such intentions are sometimes constitutive of the work’s features or content” (p. 835).

³ Some of the key moderate intentionalists are Livingston, Mele, Iseminger, Carroll, Currie and Walton .

MAI further claims that the artist's intentions do not always establish the work's meaning but at the same time maintains that in the cases where intentions are compatible with the work then they can be constitutive of a work's implicit meanings; artists sometimes boost the value of their work by expressing attitudes implicitly and indirectly (p. 835). The notion of implicit meanings is enunciated in the context of Gricean ideas of conversational implicature which will be discussed in detail along with Carroll's position of art as conversation in chapter 6.

Moreover, the meanings intended by the artist are the most appropriate interpretations of a work and, as a result, interpretations can sometimes either be appropriate or non-appropriate. I would define appropriate interpretation in EAI and MAI as an interpretation which is proper and embraces some kind of objectivity which as a result makes it acceptable within a certain system of premises – namely EAI and MAI. For instance, it is acceptable to say that in Gericault's *The Raft of the Medusa*⁴ that the artist intended to represent raft called Medusa and its survivors. This is an appropriate interpretation. Non-appropriate interpretation entails an understanding which is not suitable to artistic intentions: for example, if a viewer thinks that the painting is about a raft from a ship of pilgrims. If the artist's intentions are successfully communicated, that is, her intentions are apparent in the work, then they lead to the appropriate interpretation. Thus, for MAI meaning can be conceived as a stable commodity and the ultimate aim of interpretation is to find the true intended meaning(s). In addition to this, the conception that art in general is

⁴ Table of Pictures, *Figure 1*.

essentially about communication is an important position within the MAI context, since MAI is principally a theory of searching the artist's intended meaning.⁵

Extreme Actual Intentionalism

Extreme actual intentionalism is a much stronger and absolute version of MAI, and is also sometimes referred to as strong or absolute intentionalism. This version of intentionalism places a lot of emphasis on the logical equivalence between a work's meaning and the artist's intentions. The most important premise of EAI is concerned with the utterer's meaning (artist's meaning) and it claims that interpretation should be driven by what is intended by the artist even when she fails to achieve her intention. That is to say, a work still contains the meanings it was intended to, despite the fact that these meanings may be obscured or cannot be immediately identified in the work. Furthermore, it perceives the understanding of literary works in a similar way to the understanding of utterances in linguistic communication (Livingston 1998, p. 831). In this view, meaning constitutes a definitive part of the work and there is an objective meaning which it is the task of the interpreter to locate.⁶

Hypothetical Intentionalism

This view accepts that there is intention in art, but holds that the intention that shows the meaning of a work is not the actual artist's intention but some other intention that the reader can suppose about an imagined artist. In this process, the actual intentions of an

⁵ This will also be elaborated in chapter 6 along the discussion about Carroll.

⁶ The most prominent EA intentionalists are Hirsch, Knapp and Michaels whose specific views will be examined later.

artist need not be considered in the interpretation of the work, rather the reader has to look for the most likely intentions of a supposed artist. The best account of hypothetical intentions is the one that makes the work epistemically and aesthetically best.

Levinson (2004) is the major proponent of hypothetical intentionalism. He formulates his account by putting forth the following four models of meaning of literary interpretation: a) the kind of meaning which is analogous to word-sequence meaning, b) the meaning which is analogous to the utterer's meaning, c) the meaning that is analogous to the utterance meaning and d) ludic meaning. Word-sequence meaning is the dictionary meaning, both literal and connotative. The utterer's meaning is the meaning the author intentionally has in mind to convey by the use of certain means. Utterance meaning is the meaning that springs from the means the author used in the context it is uttered, the meaning that results from the means used. Ludic meaning involves any meanings which are given to a 'brute' text or a text-as-utterance through a play of interpretation that is defined loosely by 'plausibility, intelligibility and interest' (p. 291).

The first aspect to point out is that for Levinson, the meaning of literary texts is not equal to word or sentence-sequence meaning because in the process of interpretation it is important to have in mind that the sentences uttered come from somebody's (an author's) mind, they have a purpose and they are expressed as an act of communication by means of sentences. The case is that the reader does not treat a literary text in the same way one would treat random words or sentences found somewhere. In a literary work the sentences are not a simple collection of sentences but they are 'the body and substance of what we

assume to be a unitary act of expression' (p. 291). Through this position he asserts that the author's intention is important to the work's interpretation.

For Levinson, the most important model of meaning is utterance meaning.⁷ Utterance meaning is determined by the context of the work's presentation. This perhaps includes some characteristics of the author and some other aspects related to its place in culture. Therefore, utterance meaning is the hypothesis of the utterer's meaning that the reader constructs, substantiated on the grounds of her beliefs and attitudes which she has as an intended reader. Thus, utterance and the utterer's meaning are different. Nevertheless they are related conceptually. That is to say, in order to grasp the utterance meaning, according to Levinson, one has to aim 'at utterer's meaning in the most comprehensive and informed manner we can muster as the utterance's intended recipients' (p. 292). This account of utterance meaning does not entail that one should seek the actual intention of the author. It is rather a hypothesized intention which results from all the information provided from the text and its creative context, such as the time and place of the work's creation, the cultural and social norms of that age and so on. In other words, the meaning of a literary text is not the meaning produced by the words and sentences received from the author's actual intention, but it is the best hypothesized attribution of the author's intention on the part of the reader. This is crucial for Levinson because this parameter clearly differentiates actual from hypothetical intentionalism (p. 292). I will not address any problems with hypothetical intentionalism because in my view it does not diverge to a large extent from actual intentionalism, as I will argue that it shares its faults.

⁷ Utterance meaning is verbal and therefore linguistic; in the context of this project utterance refers to the representation of painting since painting is not committed to language and other parameters that come with it.

Anti-intentionalism

The main proponents of the anti-intentionalist position are Wimsatt and Beardsley (1995) whose theses are asserted in the *Intentional Fallacy*. They propose that knowledge of the artist's intentions is irrelevant to the interpretation of a work of art and that a work of art is public; it is publicly shared and does not aesthetically belong to anyone and therefore its interpretation is varied since it is 'measured against something that is outside its author' (p. 379). In particular, they claim that: "...the design or intention of the author is neither available nor desirable as a standard for judging the success of a work of a literary art" (p. 375). From this perspective, interpretation of a work of art neither requires that the viewer identify the artist's intentions nor that interpretation derives from or through the work itself.

Semantic and Categorical Intentions

My target in this section is not to discuss but to mention Walton's and Levinson's view on semantic and categorical intentions in order to further clarify the nature of actual intentionalism and its versions. Throughout this project I endorse the view that categorical intentions determine how a work of art is to be conceived and further claim that semantic intentions do not determine a work's meaning.

Walton's claim is that categorical interpretation is crucial to the proper understanding of semantic intentions. For instance, we need to know in assessing a Byzantine icon of a saint whose halo has been completely faded, and thus is absent from the picture, that it is not a painting with a person. In *Categories of Art* Walton (1970) expounds a theory about how

the perception of representation works. He holds that for any category of art there are standard, variable and contra-standard properties. This is explained as follows.

Works of art are things which have various properties and we are primarily interested in their perceptual properties like for example the visual properties of painting. Works of art have aesthetic and non-aesthetic properties; aesthetic properties like the sense of agony, the colour palette, shape, form and composition. Aesthetic properties are characteristics of works of art which can be seen in the work, i.e. to see a painting's sense of agony (pp. 335-336). In particular, he claims that:

“A work's aesthetic properties depend not only on its non-aesthetic ones, but also on which of its non-aesthetic properties are 'standard', which 'variable', and which 'contra-standard'” (p. 338).

The viewer perceives the representation of a work which is determined by one of the three kinds of properties of the category. The aesthetic properties a work of art seems to us to have depend on which of them are standard, variable and contra-standard for us. A feature of work is *standard* with reference to a category in the case it is among those in virtue of which 'works in that category belong to that category' (a lack of that feature would disqualify a work from that category). A feature is *variable* with reference to a category in the case it has nothing to do with works' belonging to that category. A feature is *contra-standard* with reference to that category, that is to say, absence of a standard feature or presence of a feature which tends to disqualify works as members of the category. Walton suggests that it is unclear in all cases whether a feature is standard, variable or contra-standard with respect to a category as the criteria that classify works of art are not precise. Despite that, there are a lot of clear examples. For instance, the flatness of a painting and the motionlessness of its markings are *standard*, its specific forms and colours are *variable*

with respect to the category of painting and the fact that there are some three-dimensional things stuck on the canvas would be *contra-standard* to the category of painting (pp. 339-340). He argues that what aesthetic properties a work seems to have will depend on what the viewer believes are the standard, variable and contra-standard features relative to a category. But what aesthetic properties it really does have depends on the true facts about category membership (genre, material, kind of art) and what is standard, variable and contra-standard for that category.

Another important conception of categorical and semantic intentions is provided by Jerrold Levinson. Levinson (1992) distinguishes two kinds of intentions in the process of the production and reception of art: semantic and categorical intentions. The view of categorical intentions argues that a work is conceptualized and defined by the category or the genre to which the work belongs. This category is determined not only by the artist but also by the date of the work's production. The interpreter is therefore encouraged to classify the work within a certain genre. Categorical intentions involve intentions of the artist regarding how the work is to be approached. These intentions are basic in the sense that the artist determines the conception of what the work is and what it is for, like for instance whether something is a painting or sculpture, whether a piece of text is a poem or a novel, whether a painting is cubist or a still life.

On the other hand, semantic intentions involve the intentions of the artist to mean something by her work. According to Levinson, semantic intentions can fail, while categorical intentions rarely do so. This is because if for example an artist wants to convey *A* through her work but ends up conveying *B*, then she semantically failed. But it is very

difficult to fail if she wanted her work to be a poem or a novel. For Levinson, categorical intentions are of higher importance than semantic intentions. The semantic intentions of an artist who fails to convey what she intends do not determine the reception of the work, but on the other hand, categorical intentions such as what kind of work is the work are basic to how the work is to be conceived. Categorical intentions 'orient' the interpreter in relation to the work and constitute the basic level which will enable her to find meanings in the work. Moreover, categorical intentions are inherently part of the creation of the work and at the point where the artist decides that her work is finished she determines what kind her work is: the making and the materials of the work will determine whether the work is for instance a painting or a poem or a film (pp. 236-237).

CHAPTER 3

The nature of intention

I introduce this chapter here in order to help understand the notion of intention and particularly the notion of intention in the process of art-making as this will later help distinguish how the interpretation of intentions in everyday actions differ from interpretation of intentions in artistic actions. This chapter examines the nature of intention and is divided in two parts. The first part examines the notion of intention, firstly how it is perceived in the context of Anscombe's *Intention* and the second part how this notion is to be perceived in relation to art making. It seems that MA and EA intentionalists maintain a conception of artist's intentions that is analogous to intentions of everyday actions. I assume that in their accounts they do not explain the nature of intention in depth and specifically in the realm of the creative process and how it might be distinctive in special ways both when employed in action and when it is interpreted. To clarify this, I will discuss the question whether artists always have intentions and examine some states that usually surround the artist which are not to be intrinsically perceived as intentions. For this reason, it is important to explore the nature of intention in painting process in more depth as this will help understand that making a painting is not a pure transference of intentions and therefore interpretation is not a pure decoding of those intentions.

I.

Anscombe's account: what is intention?

My aim is to focus on certain aspects of Anscombe's theory which are relevant to the discussion of intentions in art making and not to give a complete account of it. Anscombe (2000) claims that "Intention appears to be something that we can express" (p. 5).

According to her, in order to understand what it is to intend to act one has to understand intentional action. We act intentionally when a certain sense of the question 'why' is given application to our action and when we perform an intentional action we also act for reasons (p. 9). To explain that, she says:

“What distinguishes actions which are intentional from those which are not? 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 sense is of course that in which the answer, if positive, gives a reason for acting” (p. 9).

To answer 'what is it for an agent to act intentionally' Anscombe gives the following criteria: i) an act is intentional when the agent can know that he is executing that act and why she is executing it, ii) an act is intentional when the question 'why' is given application, iii) an act is intentional when the question 'why' can be answered in any of the following ways: i) an interpretation of the action and ii) a reference to something in the future (pp. 24-28).

The questions that arise here are: what is it for 'why' to have application' and 'what does 'why' mean? To explain the sense of 'why' she suggests that we can say it is a request for the agent's reasons for action; the expression of intention is justified by reason (p. 6). That is to say, A acts intentionally when the question 'what are A's reasons for acting?' has application. According to Anscombe 'why' has three senses: a) evidential, b) causal and c) reason-giving. She asserts that someone acts intentionally if the third sense has application (pp. 9-10). For example, when someone asks 'why did you kill him?' and replies 'he killed my father', this is a reason rather than a cause. Something "is a reason, as opposed to a cause, when the movement is voluntary and intentional" (p. 10).

Despite that, there are cases, according to Anscombe, where the question ‘why’ fails to have application: namely, when the agent is unaware that she does that action (she does not know she is doing something) and when the action is involuntary (like the peristaltic movement of the gut) as well as when the agent has non-observational knowledge that she is doing something, but does not have non-observational knowledge of what is the cause of her doing something (pp. 11-13). Anscombe claims that there is knowledge without observation, that is to say, an agent knows something without observation if she knows and there is no distinct sensory event on the basis of which she knows it. The crucial point is that for Anscombe, intentional action is that which the agent knows she is doing without having to look. She believes that intentional action and non-observational knowledge are necessarily connected. She says:

“We first point out a particular class of things which are true of a man: namely the class of things he *knows without observation*. E.g. a man usually knows the position of his limbs without observation. It is without observation, because nothing *shews* him the position of his limbs; it is not as if he were going by a tingle in his knee, which is the sign that it is bent and not straight. Where we can speak of separately describable sensations, having which is in some sense our criterion for saying something, then we can speak of observing that thing; but that is not generally so when we know the position of our limbs” (p. 13).

In summary, Anscombe’s criteria of an intentional action are: someone acts intentionally i) when a certain sense of the question ‘Why’ (once it is not a request for cause or evidence) is given application to her action, ii) when she knows that she is doing something non-observationally and iii) when she knows what is the cause of doing something non-observationally.

This account of intention will be examined below in relation with what intention involves in the process of painting. This will eventually suggest that intentions in the context of

Anscombe's account, and actual intentionalism, are expressed in different ways than intentions in painting and hence are to be differently interpreted.

II.

How intention is expressed in painting and everyday actions

By intentions in everyday actions I mean intentions similar to the ones discussed in Anscombe's context, like for example raising one's arm, watching a film, reading a book and so on. In painting there are various kinds of intentions that underlie the process of creation as well as some other states which are frequently classified as intentions but which do not constitute intentions in the way they are conceived of in everyday actions. This develops in the following discussion.

When an artist sets out to make a painting she might have a wide range of possible intentions, among others. Firstly, she can have general and specific intentions. General intentions are those for example where she intends to paint a landscape (categorical intentions), or to make a painting look dramatic, and specific intentions are those where she intends to use a specific colour, line or shape. Also, she can have intentions that are not related to the aesthetic; like for instance when she wants to sell, instruct and so on. Another kind of intention can be the intention not to intend anything particular with the work.⁸ Moreover, artist's intentions include choosing a medium, method or technique, details of compositional elements and the intentions to represent or convey meaning (semantic intentions). Sometimes an artist may succeed in her intentions with regard to the use of her medium but may fail in her intentions to convey the meaning she initially envisaged conveying, or vice versa.

⁸ This is discussed in detail throughout sections 1, 2 and 3 of this part.

In addition to this, for an artist to have intentions can encompass many situations and states, which actual intentionalists only conceive of as intentions. Although the artist (sometimes) has intentions she also undergoes states that do not involve intentions or intentions that function in the same way as intentions in everyday actions. In the making of painting, intention takes place when the artist begins by having a fixed *plan* and follow it to the letter; or when she initially has a plan but later on changes her mind consciously and ends up doing something else. Such a *plan* is a kind of intention. Other states that do not involve intention can include the following: Seeing a good-looking or unattractive person can give the artist a *motive* to paint a portrait. Having talked to a humble person can be an *inspiration* to paint a portrait. The fact that someone is leaving can give a *reason* to paint a portrait. The feeling of enjoyment or pain can also be a reason to paint a portrait. To paint a portrait of an irritated person which represents her as calm and peaceful is something that the artist might have *wished*. To be curious about how it is possible to make a portrait of someone by the use of pigments *can make* a painter paint a picture, and to feel enticed to painting can be a *desire* to paint. A motive, an inspiration, a reason, a wish or a desire are not all equal to intention as it is perceived in Anscombe's account and as it seems to be inferred by actual intentionalism.

As mentioned earlier, Anscombe's view that for an act to be intentional the agent has to know she is doing that action and know why she doing it, points towards an appeal for the agent's reasons for action. In relation to the artist's intentions in pain ting, we can say of an artist who is inspired (or desired or experimented) to do a certain painting of an humble person that this inspiration constituted the reason and by extension her intention to do this

painting. In other words, if we ask ‘why did the artist paint this painting?’ we will say that she painted it *because* she got inspired by a humble person. This explanation sounds plausible but it does not necessarily follow that inspiration, motives or desires are reasons which always lead to the intention to do a painting, as we will see later with specific examples. It appears that sometimes artists intend certain actions without knowing about those actions (like experimentation) and perform certain actions without knowing why they do so in specific. In the following section I will analyse some of the states that do not always involve intention in the same sense as those in everyday actions, like inspiration, desire and experimentation.

The argument of this part proposes that artists do not only have intentions when they paint, but they also undergo other states, as will be explained below, and engage in actions which are not always intentional. As pointed out earlier, for an artist intending to be doing can involve many situations and states: a motive, a plan, an inspiration, a reason, a wish or a desire, can all be part of the artist’s mental states, but not all of them are equal to intention like they might be in everyday actions. Inspiration, desire and experimentation constitute states and actions which are prolific within the artist and her creative process, and do not always involve the application of intention in the way everyday actions do. Therefore, a viewer searching for artist’s intentions can sometimes imply a search for something that has not taken place. For example, it may be the case that some actions arise out of spur of the moment or out of unconscious states as we will see below, rather than out of intention. To illustrate the point I will discuss the following states and actions.

1. Inspiration

In this section I propose that inspiration is a key stage in the artist's creative process and it is not intrinsically related to expression of intention in the way assumed in MAI and EAI context. I distinguish artistic inspiration in three kinds: (i) instinctive inspiration, (ii) euphoria of production and (iii) invoked inspiration.

(i) Instinctive Inspiration

The first kind concerns instinctive inspiration when it comes unsought and spontaneously. In this instance inspiration is “the sudden genesis of an idea in consciousness without the interference of will” (Tegopoulos-Fitrakis 1993, p. 242). The corresponding Greek word is *empneusi* which can be rendered as something like in-breath. A breath is automatic and comes naturally and it constitutes one of the ways inspiration comes to artists in cases like that – it comes when it is unintentionally invited, just like a breath. It is closely related to openness, a state which is unforced and does not require reason for coming to one's mind. It implicates a state of sudden stimulations which result in the act of painting, incentives that are unexpected and unplanned. It provokes feeling, stimulates imagination and is more of an impulse, an urge, rather than an intention as one does not intend this kind of inspiration, it comes involuntarily without consciously seeking it.

An example of this first kind of inspiration can involve cases when the artist by seeing a certain state of affairs, unexpectedly paints that with no conscious thinking and without knowing why; or while she is having dinner all of a sudden a picture comes to her mind without having prior intention to think about it which she then paints. One could claim that it is hard to see the contrast of inspiration and intention here as on a first look it may seem

natural to think that an artist is first inspired to paint *A* which intuitively comes to her mind and then intends to paint *A* as a result of her inspiration, therefore, since inspiration is followed by an intentional action (painting) then it should be conceived of as intention. The distinction of inspiration and intention here links to the above definition given by Anscombe with regard to the question 'why'. She claims that one of the criteria of an intentional action is for the agent to know why she is doing that action. The difficulty with accepting that the picture which unexpectedly comes to the artist's mind (inspiration) is an intention is constituted from the fact that when the artist gets inspired she does not know why this has happened to her; i.e. while she goes to the post office or cleans the house suddenly a picture comes to her mind which she then decides to paint, she does not know why this picture came to her mind; she had not intended to think about that picture. To say that she painted the picture because it suddenly came to her mind, and therefore claim that it is a reason for action and as such an intention, is a superficial approach to adopt in interpretation because this does not establish a meaningful reason that gives information or explanation of her action as instances of everyday actions may do. For instance, in everyday actions, in the statement 'I am studying because tomorrow I have exams' the reason I am studying is because I have an exam which explains why I am doing this action. The reason gives justified and useful information about the question 'why I am studying'. With regard to asking 'why did the artist paint that picture?' and answering that 'she painted it because it suddenly came to her mind while she was taking a walk' does not establish a justified and useful reason that gives information about the painting's interpretation. To take this reason into consideration would be shallow for interpreting painting as it does not give explanatory information about it. Useful information, which

would count as reason, could be for instance the answer that the artist painted this picture because she wanted to represent or express concept *X* or to stimulate the viewer in this or that way. This reason gives ground to the viewer to interpret the artist's intentions, but when the artist's intentions are constituted by instinctive inspiration which she herself does not know why she thought of, then they might not be useful to search for. Here, one might point out that inspiration of this sort looks like cause than a reason. On a first look, it is a cause because it was unintentionally induced (like the case when a picture of something comes to the artist's mind). On a second look, it is a reason because after the un-induced appearance of the picture the artist intentionally decided to paint it.

Some artists have claimed that while painting they are overwhelmed by the fact that the picture they produce is beyond their conscious control. In particular, Kokoschka – speaking of images and visions that are beyond our control – states that:

“Consciousness is a sea ringed about with visions, and what floats into this sea is beyond our control. Whether the image that takes shape suddenly is of material or an immaterial character, figurative or non-figurative, that too is beyond our control. It is the psyche which speaks, and all the artist can do is to bear witness to the vision within himself. But the vision itself is fed by the images from all human experience, as a lamp with oil, and the flame leaps before the artist's eyes as the oil feeds it” (Read 1991 p. 244).

The inspiration, or the conception, of a picture in such a process occurs automatically, that is to say, it does not need any stipulated reason for action which explains the intention. The inspired creation of painting in such cases does not require a kind of *aitiotis*. It is difficult to ask why did someone suddenly got inspired with a certain idea or why that picture came to her mind. In cases like this there is no clearly explicable reason why an artist created a painting. It is something that escapes her intentional behavior and comes at a moment

when it is not anticipated. In everyday actions discussed by Anscombe, the agent has to be aware of why she is acting in a certain way for that action to be intentional. Inasmuch this might be true of intentions in everyday actions, in painting, in cases of instinctive inspiration, it is hard for an artist to know why a picture unpredictably appeared in her mind and constituted an inspiration for her.

(ii) Euphoria of production

The second kind of inspiration is euphoria of production. In the course of this state the artist feels a special kind of energy to create a painting without really intending to do something specific; she feels a drive to perform the actual act of painting without consciously knowing why she feels a drive to paint; what she will eventually paint will come along while she paints. The difference of instinctive inspiration and inspiration as euphoria of production lies in the fact that the first one involves an unexpectability of why certain pictures come to the artist's mind and the second one boils down to a sense of energy which is directly connected to *action to create*. Instances of the artist's experience of euphoria of production include cases like when she enters her studio, picks up a canvas among many sizes of canvases without thinking much about picking a certain size; she begins mixing colours and applies them on the surface without too much conscious thought and then sees that she has started painting a seascape by using yellow palette paints and the specific technique she does. Let's suppose that in such a case, if a critic were to ask the artist 'Why did you paint this picture?' – in a search to spot her intentions and therefore understand the painting – she would reply 'I felt like painting and as a result I painted this'. In a different case where the artist does not paint out of such a kind of inspiration (consciously intends to paint a seascape) and intentionally paints a yellow-palette seascape

because i.e. she wants to experience and enjoy intensity, if a critic were to ask her ‘Why did you paint this’ she would reply ‘I was captivated by the strength of waves and wanted to depict this and eventually to create the aesthesis of vibrancy through yellow tones’ is a different kind of reply than the first one. In the second case, the critic has a ground to comment on the artist’s statement and construct assumptions about her intentions but in the first case it is difficult to explain her statement. Inspiration of this kind is rather indescribable because it is difficult to explain why and where it comes from; sometimes intentional actions in painting can be put in words and somehow be explained like in the first case just cited, but with regard to the second one it is hard to explain why someone felt a euphoria of production to paint a yellow-palette seascape. By saying that she *felt like that* she does not really articulate a meaningful sentence that hints at something concrete or that shows why she painted that. To say ‘I felt like painting it’ does not contribute to a meaningful statement. Strictly speaking such statements do not say anything. In this instance, the critic or the viewer can only draw hypothetical conclusions about the artist’s intentions because the artist’s statement does not really offer something illuminating or something that could be useful for the viewer’s interpretation. I think both the state of instinctive inspiration and euphoria of production are underrated by MAI in relation to the following claim. Livingston states that the moderate intentionalist:

“Holds that the theory of appreciation and interpretation should be attuned to the artist’s constitutive role in the making of works. It is the artist who, within “natural and logical limits,” makes the work, and choosing the settling on categories and meanings is part of that creative process. We ought to reject the criticism promoting idea that it is the reader who invents the story; we prefer instead, a communicative model in which the reader attempts to discover the nature of the story as told, acknowledging that it is the storyteller who, within limits and contingent on his or her ability, decides what happens in the story he or she is going

to tell, including events that need not, for various reasons, be related directly in the text” (1998 p. 844).

Livingston in this passage refers to the creative process and stresses how important the constitutive role of the artist is in interpretation. He says that the artist is the storyteller – the work maker – and the one who communicates her story to the reader. It is true that the artist decides on her artwork but Livingston here seems to articulate his claim as if this is were readily clear. That is to say, he appears to assume that intentions are sort of reasonably applied; he says within ‘natural and logical limits’ the artist chooses, decides, tells. His considerations give the impression of being briefly speculative; he does not analyze the creative process in order to deeply appreciate what the creative process encompasses and how the artist actually executes her intentions which will be subsequently interpreted. Additionally, while he mentions ‘natural and logical limits’ – an important notion within intending to be making art – he does not explain it in order to give a glimpse into what this limits may involve. This leaves the expression of intention indeterminate and outruns other artistic states surrounding the artist (this account seems to assume that artists are only surrounded by intentions).

The following example by Paul Klee aims to support the above kind of inspiration as euphoria of production and add to MAI that the expression of intention in art making is not as clearly employed as it might be in everyday actions, and thus the ‘communicative model’ Livingston refers to might not apply to the artist always intending to communicate something, and knowing what the result of the expression will be. Klee stresses the subjective character of the artist’s inspiration and how graphic elements (like dot, line, plane and space) are put into action by an ‘energy discharged within the artist’s mind’. He highlights the dynamic nature of art by saying that:

“Pictorial art springs from movement, is itself fixed movement, and is perceived through movements... The creative impulse suddenly springs to life, like a flame, passes through the hand on the canvas, where it spreads farther until, like the spark that closes an electric circuit, it returns to the source: the eye and the mind” (Read, p. 182).

Klee states that the crucial formative process performed by movements occurs below the level of awareness and that some things in painting cannot be explained. He adds that: “a composition is an image of creation itself – ‘Genesis eternal’, a penetration by human consciousness to ‘that secret place where primaeval power nurtures all evolution’” (Read, pp. 186-187). He offers a more detailed account about the artistic process and describes the transformations or deformations that the visual image goes through until it develops to a significant representation:

“The artist has busied himself with this multiform world and has in some measure got his bearing in it, quietly, all by himself. He is so well oriented that he can put order into the flux of phenomena and experiences. This sense of direction in nature and life, this branching and spreading array, I shall compare with the root of the tree.

‘From the root the sap rises up into the artist, flows through him, flows through him, flows to his eye. ‘He is the trunk of the tree. ‘Overwhelmed and activated by the force of the current, he conveys his vision into his work. ‘In full view of the world, the crown of the tree unfolds and spreads in time and in space, and so with his work. Nobody will expect a tree to form its crown in exactly the same way as its root. Between above and below there cannot be exact mirror images of each other. It is obvious that different action operating in different elements must produce vital divergences. ‘But it is just the artist who at times is denied those departures from nature which his art demands. He was even been accused of incompetence and deliberate distortion. ‘And yet, standing at his appointed place, as the trunk of the tree, he does nothing other than gather and pass on what rises from the depths. He neither serves nor commands – he transmits. ‘His position is humble. And the beauty at the crown is not his own; it has merely passed through him’” (Read, pp. 182-186).

This account seems to emphasize that sometimes an artist knows what action she is doing without knowing about the physical action by which she executes it; she paints a painting without knowing how and why this takes the form it takes. Klee talks about a sense of direction in life and nature which penetrates the artist and activates him to convey his vision into work through his way. He transmits what has arisen to him, which Klee claims that does not belong to him, it just passes through the artist and is conveyed through the work. My view is that his account of flow highlights the fact that he does not know how and why this happens to him. It looks as if this is an unexplained sort of situation and does not in fact offer meaningful grounds as to why an artist has painted a work. It actually appears to be a bizarre account which someone could easily dismiss as it does not really constitute a logical explanation of intentional action on the part of the artist.

(iii) Invoked inspiration

The third kind of inspiration in painting is ‘invoked inspiration’ and it differs from the first two in the degree of intentional intensity – this one is intentionally and consciously invoked – it does not come uninvited to the artist as the first two. Inspiration in this case is closely related to the notion of ideas generation. This is a process where the artist intentionally wishes to get inspired and therefore uses various mental and material techniques together in order to achieve a state of inspiration. Mental techniques are those like brainstorming, using memory, association or disassociation, displacing things or situations and placing them in an another context or vice versa, exercising abstract or lateral thinking, searching a specific thing or concept, transforming something that is concrete to something vague or vice versa, staring at an object until various things and situations come to her mind, and so on. Material techniques concern various materials,

tools and processes which the artist practices. Both mental and material techniques can help one another or they can happen at the same time automatically and they are both a request for generation or invention of ideas.

There can be endless techniques: for example, surrealists⁹ have intentionally used drugs in order to stimulate the unconscious and thus generate ideas which would eventually lead to art making. Automatic writing was one of the most widespread techniques to stimulate creative urges. It is the practice of writing down as quickly as possible without revising what is written and without the control of reason. The aim was to write down all these that passed through the author's mind when she was able to disengage herself from the world outside. The target of this technique was to lay bare the 'mental matter' and disconnect it from thought (Alexandrian 1995, p. 47). Automatic writing techniques were used for painting and drawing: artists were painting directly on the painting without making preliminary sketches prior to the work that was to follow.

The issue at examination here is that it is difficult to equate the wilful search for ideas with intention as a justified reason for painting. This is because in following Anscombe's model of reason giving, we cannot give a reason as to why specific ideas come to the mind even when they are intentionally invoked. They come about because we consciously intend to invoke them but there is no logical explanation about why these specific ideas came about (and why other different ideas did not come about); they come out of reflex, as a reaction

⁹ In surrealism artists experimented a lot with automatism, games, chance, coincidence, error and surprise and were liberated of any kind of aesthetic and moral concerns. They sought after to disturb conscious thought by the use of irrationality, fantasy, analysis of dreams, the absurd, nonsense and desired a trance and ecstatic states when painting in order to achieve thought that is not controlled by reason. In order to reach this state they made use of drugs and strong stimulants. They were open to the exploration of the subconscious, the unknown and to the total liberation of imagination. Another important characteristic of surrealists is that they avoided being literary and were encouraged to paint in a spontaneous state of expression and to create directly on the painting (Alexandrian 1995, p. 7, 31, 46, 67).

to the appeal for inspiration, as it seems to be true of most ideas. Reflex itself does not seem to count as a reason for intending in painting. In everyday actions we if were to ask someone ‘Why do you raise your hand?’ and the reply is ‘Because I want to pick up something’, there is an explanation as to why the agent raises her hand. It can be said that at some point after asking successive questions about ‘why did you do that?’ explanation will stop at some point. The idea is that invoking inspiration which results in painting is an artist’s job – this is what she does and she does not want to scrutinize her actions. The idea of practice and individual decisions when someone is an artist work like that because this is her job – this is what she does. It is a similar activity to the one of priest drinking communion. It is his job to do that and he does not scrutinize his action because this is what he does, this is part of his job and he does not need explanation as to why he does that. The contrast between intending to invoke inspiration with intentions in everyday actions in Anscombe’s approach is that in the case of consciously invoking an idea the artist does not know what it is to come. However, in the case when an agent intends to raise her hand she knows she is doing this because she want to pick up something – she knows that her hand will go up and will enable her to pick X (unless she suddenly feels weak or she is physically unable to do that). In painting, an artist does not know the outcome of her endeavour when she invokes ideas. And she also does not know how the idea is going to eventually look like when put on canvas by the use of certain means and materials. Artists intend to invoke ideas but they do not know what idea they will have and how the idea will be formed. We can intend to produce ideas, but we cannot intend the idea itself because an idea is unknown until it is thought of. Theoretically, intention to generate ideas is indeed intentional: ‘I intend to generate ideas about theme A’. But the generation

of ideas itself when practiced in the mind or directly on canvas, that is to say, the result of the generation of ideas, is unforeseen; it is an act of generation, the birth of an idea that is yet not known. The generation of ideas on a first level and its application on a second level is a startling challenge for the artist and the outcome remains indeterminate until it is practically performed.

The three kinds of inspiration suggest that inspiration of the first two cases comes unexpectedly to the artist's mind and that even when it is invoked, as in the third case, it is unpredictable. What this examination amounts to is to highlight the fact that the artist does not really know why she paints pictures that uninvited come to her mind and based on this, stating that she does not know why, then for the viewer the artist's statement does not point to a meaningful interpretation. This kind of state, does not stand on the same level as the expression of intention in everyday actions.

2. Desire

Another important state that surrounds the artist is desire. This is divided in unconscious desire to paint and conscious desire to paint for pleasure. Below there is an account of desire by Anscombe which is used to illuminate how the expression of desire in everyday actions, being conceived of as intention, differs from the notion of desire in art making.

Anscombe states that it is tempting to think of intentions as mental states which are independent of intentional actions, assuming that this is because there can be fully formed intentions which do not result in intentional actions (pp. 8-10). However, she strongly

wants to rebut the idea that intentions are mental states only and asserts that we cannot understand intentions to act independently of intentional action. In particular, she says:

“... a man can form an intention which he then does nothing to carry out, either because he is prevented, or because he changes his mind: but the intention itself can be complete, although it remains a purely interior thing. All this comprises to make us think that if we want to know a man's intentions it is into the contents of his mind, and only into these, that we must inquire; and hence, that if we wish what intention is, we must be investigating something whose existence is purely in the sphere of the mind; and that although intentions issue in actions, and the way this happens also presents interesting questions, still what physically takes place, i.e. what a man actually does, is the very last thing we need consider in our inquiry. Whereas I wish to say that it is the first.” (p. 9).

Through the above quote Anscombe argues that intentions are mental states which are unbreakably connected with intentional action; she perceives intention to be intending to be doing. She places a lot of emphasis on this conception by distancing herself from previous philosophical discussions which maintain that intentions are mental states which take place contingently and which are hard to know or to know at all. In addition to that, she denies the possibility of doing without intending, but she does not deny intending without doing.

It is true from Anscombe's observations that there are cases where everyday actions are indeed the result of conscious intending. Nonetheless, it does not seem persuasive that the theory of intending as doing is always true because it is doubtful whether all actions are executed because of a reason and in extension because of an intention. A preliminary worry about her claim is that it seems to leave the implication that all actions are preceded by intention. In other words, someone is executing an action because she intends so.

Let us use the following example of everyday action to speculate to what degree actions need be the result of intentions. According to Anscombe's model, it seems natural to infer that the fact that an agent bites her nails shows that her intention is to bite her nails. All the same, it is possible that her action does not entail that she intends to do so. She indeed bites her nails, and this is what her action itself manifests, but at the same time it can be true that on the contrary she does not intend to bite them and consciously aims to quit this; however, in unexpected moments an impulse or unconscious need pushes her to do it without really and consciously intending to be doing so. If we conceive of impulse as an unconscious state which cannot be justified by reason then it seems natural to suggest that this state is not intentional and thus the assumption that actions followed by such states do not always show the intention behind it. By contrast, according to Anscombe's view this kind of impulse or desire is perceived as intention. She contends that some reasons for action may never become conscious and that desire (being a reason) might not manifest itself as any specific conscious event which made someone pursue a certain action; in such cases only the action is manifest (2000, p. 17). For example, someone who desires for apples might make one get some, but the desire might not be conscious in the mind of the agent. This suggests that the agent's action (that she has finally eaten apples) indicates the reason and thus her desire to eat apples, despite the fact that she was not conscious of her desire for apples. The fact that an agent finally eats apples because she desires so and is unconscious of that, her actual act of eating apples is not based on chance. She feels a biological drive to eat apples which leads to the specific act of eating apples.

The above discussion used alongside Anscombe's theory of intending to be doing is not principally used to reject Anscombe's theory of intention *per se* but to reinforce the view

that, even assuming she were right about intentions in everyday actions, intentions in everyday actions are expressed in a different way than in art making and as such they are also differently interpreted. Anscombe's allegation that an intentional action of doing *A* is the execution of a prior intention to do *A*, as it has already been mentioned, is constituted by the idea that not all actions are executed for a reason in art making. It may be the case that an artist paints out of unconscious desire without any prior planning of depicting a picture in specific, but rather to paint out of desire, in which case she is doing that without consciously intending to be doing so and without having decided to paint something specific in advance.

(i) Unconscious desire to paint

The first doubt about all actions being intentional in art making applies more pointedly to the state of spontaneous action as a result of unconscious desire to paint which is hard to be perceived as intentional. Spontaneity in art-making is a state where the artist acts without having prior intentions and lets herself, means and material act freely according to chance and without a plan. Spontaneity is linked to automatism, a situation where the artist is typically not aware of 'why' she is performing a specific action (i.e. applying green instead of yellow without any specific prior intention or reason for that action). This appears to be at odds with Knapp and Michaels view of intentionalism who contend that it is hard to imagine that there is in fact intentionless meaning. In particular, they claim:

“How difficult it is to imagine a case of intentionless meaning... From the standpoint of an argument against critical theory, then, the only important question is whether there can in fact be intentionless meanings. If our argument against theory is to succeed, the answer to this question must be no” (1992 p. 54).

Some representative samples of automatism constituted by surrealism and dada, as it has been mentioned in the previous section, as well as from abstract expressionists¹⁰ appear to disagree with Knapp and Michaels' view. The following examples from painting suggest that in art making it is possible to have intentionless meaning in the sense offered below. To begin with, automatism, besides being a kind to invoke inspiration, it might have also been the result of unconscious desire to paint for the sake of painting since subject-matter and objective meaning was not of much importance to surrealists and abstract expressionists; what mattered to them mostly was the automatic creation and the exploration of the unconscious. Automatism was a key step to creation, and the use of drugs or other illusionary substances were important for the promotion of the desirable state of the unconscious. Characteristically, André Breton defines surrealism as "a kind of psychic automatism which corresponds very closely to a dream state" and asserts that "the vice of surrealism is the uncontrolled and impassioned use of the drug *image*". The result of dream states and uncontrollable uses of an image yield a plethora of other unexpected images (Alexandrian 1995, p. 47).

On the same path, Jackson Pollock who was part of abstract expressionism stated that:

"My painting does not come from the easel. I hardly ever stretch my canvas before painting. I prefer to tack the unstretched canvas to the hard wall or the floor. I need the resistance of a hard surface. On the floor I am more at ease. I feel nearer, more a part of the painting, since this way I can walk around it, work from the four sides and literally be *in* the painting ... I approach painting the same way I approach drawing, that is, direct. *No sketches / acceptance of / what I do -.*" (Landau 1989 p. 168-169).

¹⁰ Abstract expressionism is concerned with the non-figurative and with action painting. Artists dripped, threw or splashed paint on the canvas through quick gestures and moves of the hand and they 'acted' on the canvas by the spontaneously and automatically improvising the image while making the image. They desired expressiveness, vitality, energy, the release of the unconscious and personal expression to be articulated on the canvas. The focus on the act of pure painting is fundamental and the artist's experience while painting is much more important than the picture produced (Landau 1989, p. 26).

His statement indicates his desire to work directly and spontaneously on the canvas without thinking about and planning in advance what his actions would be when he would be painting. His desire was to paint for the sake of painting without thinking in advance to create a meaningful image.

In view of these cases, it is quite likely that automatism undermines the notion of the artist's conscious intentions. Automatism is rather constituted by unconscious desire to paint and in some movements like surrealism to paint just for the sake of painting. Surrealist and abstract expressionist examples appear to be significantly different from some examples of everyday actions which can be preceded by concrete and conscious intentions (i.e. intending to watch a film or read a book). These issues render EAI and Anscombe's model difficult to endorse with regard to painting process as in desire to paint (or to paint for the sake of painting) artists are often possessed by unconscious intentions and unknown plans which are not directed to the creation of a meaningful representation. This suggests that artists often perform unintentional actions and they sometimes act impulsively and without reason giving because their intentions are unconscious. As a result, this implies that there can be actions without intentions by contrast to Anscombe's view which seems to deny the possibility of doing without intending, but she does not deny intending without doing.

This view is further supported by the fact that in the context of surrealism and dada it can be more difficult to find criticism on what specific paintings mean since the paintings were supposed to be executed subconsciously. Critics refer to those movements and what the movements declared, but they usually do not say that specific paintings mean specific things, as they do with reference to Renaissance or Romantic painting for instance. There

are cases where specific names are mentioned in the descriptions of some paintings, like i.e. when Dali's wife Gala is depicted, but usually description does not work in the same way as does in the aforementioned movements. Besides movements like surrealism and dada, which deliberately advocate the importance of the unconscious mind of the artist, it should be highlighted that what applies to surrealists applies to many more traditional artists as well.

Taking into consideration these issues and artists' unconscious states, it seems natural to suppose that painting which comes out of desire to paint is perplexing to the viewer since the artist herself is not (fully) aware of what she is being producing (besides her uninterestedness for subject-matter). Nevertheless, this does not imply that this kind of painting cannot be understood since there are many other aspects that help the viewer like the visual aspects and the ambiance of work. This will be analysed later in chapter 6.

Such conception of desire – perceived as unconscious intention – relates to Schueler's view that desires such as biological drives are not intentional and thus do not have a clear explanation as to why they happen. Desires are thought to be propositional attitudes, like for example in desiring a person says: 'A desires (or wants) that *B*' or 'A desires (or wants) to see her sister'. In this case if one asks why *A* wants to see her sister, she could say because she got married and this would explain her desire, and her possible resulting action, of desiring to see her sister. Schueler suggests this kind of desire is intentional. However, he claims that there are kinds of desire that are not intentional like for example biological drives of hunger, thirst, sexual desire and many more (1995, pp. 9-14). This leads him to distinguish between the impulsive and deliberate case of desire. The impulsive

case takes place when someone does not think of what she is doing and the deliberate when she does. He gives the following example. In the impulsive case, an agent walks through the kitchen a jar of chocolates catches her eye, she feels a craving and without breaking her train of thought she takes chocolates and eats them. In the deliberate case, as she walks through the kitchen a jar of chocolates catches her eye, she feels a craving but momentarily she stops the train of her thought and remembers that chocolates are fattening and bad for teeth and she takes the chocolates and eats them. The difference between these cases is mental, because the actual physical movements and actions are the same (pp. 174-75).

With this example in mind, I argue that while an artist's paints for the sake of painting that this very action might come out of impulsive desire (though not in the strict biological sense of desire like hunger or thirst) and as a result of this the artist is unaware of the resulting representation. It should be noted that this is something that does not only happen a lot in surrealism, dada and abstract expressionism but also in all genres of painting like figurative and realistic painting. Sometimes when artists work they get entirely captivated by their desire to paint that they are unaware of what they paint. Characteristically, Pollock said that:

“When I am *in* my painting, I am not aware of what I am doing. It is only after a sort of ‘get acquainted’ period that I see what I have been about... the painting has a life of its own. I try to let it come through. It is only when I loose contact with the painting that the result is a mess. Otherwise there is a total harmony, an easy give and take, and the painting comes out well” (Landau 1989, p. 168).

His action can be characterized as impulsive because he feels that he desires to paint but does not paint with specific intentions to mean in specific ways. For instance, Pollock in painting a red and blue doodle the action is manifest, but he does not know about his desire

to paint a red and blue doodle because his desire is based on spontaneous action. This suggests that sometimes desire relies on chance or accident rather than on a logical planned process that will bring about foreseeable results like the result of one raising her arm.

(ii) Conscious desire to paint for pleasure

The second kind of desire concerns the aspect of desire to paint for pleasure and it differs from the first kind in that this one can be deliberate. Desire to paint for pleasure involves a feeling to paint without having any specific objective other than the act of painting itself for pure enjoyment. In other words, sometimes artists carry out the act of painting in order to fulfil their desire to just paint for pleasure. I hold that in such cases the artist wishes to experience pure pleasure, and on a second level to meaningfully represent things to viewers. This concerns cases in which the artist intends to derive pleasure from the process of making and thus she might not be concerned as much with what her representation will ultimately be like. This state conflicts with Anscombe's claim that all actions are intentional, because as will see in this section despite the fact that desire to paint for pleasure is conscious, the outcome is not concrete enough to be called intentional. It is a pleasure to be meaningful but without intending the meaning (or meaningfully intending).

Let us see how this relates to artist's execution of this kind of state. Thomas Benton in his memoirs, who was one of Pollock's mentors, described his attitude to painting in the following way:

“A mural is for me a kind of emotional spree... A certain kind of thoughtless freedom comes over me. I don't give a damn about anything. Once on the wall, I paint with downright pleasure” (Landau 1989, p. 26).

In addition to this, surrealist experiments and games produced a kind of intoxication and exhilaration to artists. Francis Picabia was passionate with pleasure in art and stated he made use of painting as a trigger for ‘giddy and perilous leaps’ (Alexandrian 1995, pp. 41-47).

These situations emphasize the fact that artists often desire to pursue the experience of pleasure through the creative process without intending to be meaningful in a specific way. When an artist desires to paint for pleasure, in which case it may count as reason to paint, therefore as intention, this intention is not meaningful to the viewer. It is a kind of pleasure to be meaningful. This is where the difficulty lies with conceiving of the expression of intention in painting in the way it would be in everyday actions. Once this action is undertaken solely for the artist’s pleasure and it is only meaningful to her in terms of pleasure, then it is difficult for the viewer to count it as useful for her interpretation since there is no meaningful explanation as to why the artist has executed this. The action itself – and thus the finished artwork – does not manifest the intention for pleasure on the part of the viewer as it can be the case when an agent watches a film in which case we can say more clearly that she intends to be watching a film. It is not the intention in nature that differs in art making, mentally the intention is the same as in everyday actions, it is the execution and the expression of it that creates difficulties in interpreting it like in the instances of everyday actions.

3. Experimentation

As it has been mentioned previously, artists have intentions, either general or specific, categorical or semantic and so on. Despite these kinds of intentions, artists very often intend to experiment and experimentation constitutes another very crucial part of the artist's creative process. In painting, experimentation involves a practical action of investigational manipulation of materials, tools, processes and techniques. It rests a lot on the creation and invention of new things, on combination, chance, error, accident and coincidence. It is the 'trying out' of conceptions together with materials and in this process there are numerous possibilities – and impossibilities can be made possible and restrictions can be ignored. Sometimes experimentation for artists is like playing. It is comparable with a child when she plays, where she invents what she plays *while* she plays; similarly, an artist invents what she paints *while* she paints. The intention to experiment is a state that can be clear in the mind of the artist: the fact that she will experiment as soon as she begins the work or before beginning as well as the media or the colours she will use which she can decide prior to beginning the work. That is, experimentation itself is an intentional action and it can be conscious. Nevertheless, in the realm of art making and hence its expression it is to be perceived in the same way as inspiration and desire for the following reasons.

It is important to highlight that for the artist, painting is not only the finished work but also the process of getting there. Therefore, experimentation, being an essential process to reach the production of painting, is a marvelous and challenging venture for the artist, one which she might intend theoretically but which she does not know what results will bring when practiced. It gives her excitement, enthusiasm and agony for it leads her to unknown

situations like techniques, skills and processes, since the intention to experiment is for her like an exploration of possibilities, impossibilities and limitations. On the one hand, experimentation is intentional, that is to say, an artist mentally intends (when she thinks she wants and will experiment) and practically (when she actually experiments). On the other hand the very act of experimentation (that which actually comes out) is spontaneous, unplanned and frequently accidental. An artist cannot only experiment in the mind. For example, she can mentally think of various combinations and materials and possible actions she will undertake prior to beginning working but in order to produce the work she has to also experiment in practice. This kind of intention can be called an intention not to definitely intend in some direction beforehand, since the intention for an unplanned process and application, which explores possibilities and limits, is an intention which leads to unknown actions and end-results. This proposes that it is difficult to intend the process and the outcome of experimentation, while in everyday actions as mentioned previously in this chapter, the process and end-result is clearer to the mind of the agent before executing an action. The *way* an artist will experiment and what will result out of her experimentation is unpredictable, despite the fact that she may decide what materials and tools she will use in advance. The outcomes of experimentation are hard to foresee, that is why experimentation is called experimentation in the first place; because it unclear what form its outcomes will have.

By way of example, Max Ernst's approaches to experimentation led him to devise new techniques he was not aware of before starting to experiment. He used to endorse visions of the half-sleeping and half-waking state as in that way he believed he could explore his subconscious. In intending to paint, by employing this state which he thought of as part of

experimentation, he did not know what techniques he would find in his way to achieve this. His faculty of seeing visions led him to invent *collage*, in which he used different figures from illustrated catalogues to reach the ‘alchemy of the visual image’; he defined this practice as “the exploitation of the chance meeting of two remote realities on a plane unsuitable to them”. By experimenting he also discovered *frottage*:

“On 10 August 1925, in a seaside inn, he was seized by an obsession with the grooves in the graining of the floorboards. He placed a piece of paper on the boards and rubbed it with blacklead so as to obtain a tracing. And from this tracing an image arose whose shape became clear to him. Frottages suggested to him forests, pampas, hordes of animals, heads ... From this time on he regarded frottage as ‘the true equivalent of what we already know as *automatic writing*’” (Alexandrian 1995, p. 62-64).

This seems to imply that before Ernst began painting, he had intentions which could be clear in his mind (like to experiment with paper, to use blacklead and to be automatic) but the process which led to the invention of collage and frottage was unfamiliar to him until the moment he actually processed them through practice.

The unpredictability of results through the application of materials is ample in the realm of painting. For instance, intentional splashes or drops of paint on canvas produce fortuitous patches and shapes since it is uncontrollable to some degree how the splash or the drop will develop on the canvas. In his paintings, Yves Klein sometimes used to burn some part of the canvas without knowing what shape the burn would actually take at the end; that is to say, he intended the burning but did not intend and did not know the shape the burn would finally take. The final shape and form of the burn was the result of his experimentation to produce a burn on the painting (he intentionally burned the canvas but he did not know that his burning process would produce the specific resulting shape).

Similarly, when an artist for example intends to paint about solitude she may know that she intends the painting to be about solitude and may also roughly know how she will depict her conception of solitude (in what technique, colours and shapes) and in which position she will put some elements on the canvas. However, in the course of experimentation the artist does not know what form her painting will take (despite the fact that she may know that the subject she intends to depict is solitude). It is the practice itself that produces the experimentation, the subject and the representation of a painting.

What I claim here is that the implementation of intentions in experimentation is different from that in everyday actions, as intentions in everyday actions are expressed in other ways and their end-result is more predictable or manifest to another agent than it is in the interpretation of artistic intentions. Let us take an example from intention in everyday actions which will be transformed into an intention to create art in order to clarify their difference in nature more clearly. In an everyday action an agent intends to raise her arm in order to pick up something from the cupboard. She can do that by lifting her arm quickly, slowly, in a straight way, in an interrupted way or in small circular movements and so on, according to her physical stature and abilities. In all these different ways she expresses her intention to get something from the cupboard and the end-result of the intention is known to her prior to raising her arm: the arm will go up in one of the ways (or other ways) just cited and finally reach the cupboard. At most probabilities the way she will raise her arm is not of much concern for her; what is important for her is to raise her arm in order to pick something. She may also not even think about the way she will raise her arm, she will do it in any way it comes naturally at that moment since her intention is to pick up something from the cupboard.

In the case of the creating process the nature of intention differs in the following respects. Let us continue with the example of raising the arm but this time to suppose that the agent is an artist who intends to create. This is not an example of painting, but an example which can be classified under the category of performance art – yet it will help elucidate the difference claimed here. In the course of this endeavor, the artist intends to raise her arm, not to raise it in order to pick up something from the cupboard because she wants something from there, but instead she wants to raise it in order to see in how many possible ways and speeds one can do that and what skills she can apply or develop in order to execute this. Her ultimate intention is not to raise it in order to pick up something, but to explore the process and possibilities of raising her arm. Such intentions of the latter case fall in the realm of art experimentation rather than of everyday actions. This is because the artist places herself in a mental and physical condition where she tries to search in how many different ways she can raise her hand for the sake of raising it (not to pick up something from the cupboard). In this case she experiments since she does not know in how many possible ways one can perform this action. By contrast to the intention in everyday actions, the process in this case is very important since it is the process which will eventually show in what and how many ways this action can be achieved. Despite the fact that in this case the end-result is to a certain degree predictable (the arm will finally go up in one way or another), the *way* intention can be expressed in the course of the process to execute the intention is unpredictable, explorative, volatile and chanceful for the artist. The distinction here between everyday actions and painting is that in the intentions to raise one's hand the agent knows that after her intention to raise her hand is executed she will raise it (her intention is targeted towards something specific, namely, raising her arm; she

knows how to execute this action and what will be the effect). In art, it is the practice itself that produces the experimentation, the subject and the performance of the work. This suggests that the intention to raise one's arm does not boil down to a challenging act for the agent as she knows the end-result, whereas for the artist the intention to experiment in various ways is utterly stimulating due to its unknowability. To further support this, I cite the following statement by Lucian Freud:

“I think half the point of painting a picture is that you don't know what will happen. Perhaps if painters did know how it was going to turn out they wouldn't bother actually to do it” (Gayford 2010, p. 83).

His statement seems to defend that the final representation a painting will have is unknown to the artist; nevertheless, the artist yearns for this kind of process and in fact, as mentioned in the previous section, she enjoys the making of painting and experiences great pleasure in it.

A last hypothesis concerning the difference in the nature and expression of intentions in everyday actions and painting is approached again through Anscombe's definition of intentional action. She claims that one of the criteria of intentional action is non-observational knowledge, that is to say, an intentional action is that which the agent knows she is doing without having to look. While in some examples she gives this may apply, in painting the case of non-observational knowledge fails. For instance, an artist who intends to paint a landscape puts effort to paint it by experimenting in the use of materials and techniques. She can sense the movements of her hand and touch the materials she uses without looking. But the end-result of how the landscape is painted is not something that is attached to her body, it is out of it and therefore, it is something she has to look at (i.e. it is

not like when we know the position of our limbs without having to look). In painting, the artist has to look in order to know what she is painting and the visual contact with painting is one of the necessities of experiencing painting itself. While the artist intentionally and physically experiments in painting a landscape she does not have non-observational knowledge that she is doing that (she has knowledge through observation). If she closes her eyes in order to have non-observational knowledge through the movements of her hand as part of her experimentation, she still has to witness the result by looking.

Conclusion

The issue of this chapter revolved around the argument that to act intentionally in everyday actions functions differently than acting intentionally in painting. Admittedly, artists have intentions but often the execution of their intentions involves reasons for acting which are not as clear as those of the execution of everyday actions. Inspiration, desire and intention to experiment are different in nature because they cannot be as clearly justified as in everyday actions. As it has been pointed out earlier the difference between intentions in everyday actions and artistic intentions, is not mental but actual – it is based on the expression of that action. While executed, artistic intentions develop through unknown ways and have unpredictable results by contrast to the execution of intention in everyday actions. That is what makes artistic intentions not as apparent as intentions in everyday actions. Also, part of the difficulty with equating application of artistic intentions with intentions in everyday actions lies in the use and articulation of the artistic medium¹¹ which (sometimes) makes the expression of intentions arcane to the artist herself. They are not as concrete in nature as they might be in everyday actions as they involve a sense of volatility

¹¹ The use of the medium will be examined in chapter 6, part I, section 2

and changeability at the time they are being employed. In intending while painting, the artist experiences limits and possibilities, the production of form, development and transformation, the occurrence of images which are not besought and unawareness as to where they come from and how they reach the mind. These states and actions cannot be approached in the same way as the cases of raising one's arm for example. They involve a more complex account of intention as action and expression than that provided for everyday actions. Artistic intentions, states and actions are infused by a sense of exploration where the end-result is mysterious and the process of making is variable and very important. This suggests that if artistic intentions are encompassing states and artists' actions cannot be explained even by artists' then knowledge of them on the part of the viewer might not be valuable in that they do not always provide an enlightening ground for meaningful interpretation.

CHAPTER 4

Are artist's intentions apparent in her work?

After the examination of some of the artist's mental states and actions in the previous chapter, it is crucial to examine to what degree the viewer grasps the artist's intentions. It seems that according to the MAI model of interpretation, artist's intentions are apparent through her work. In addition to maintaining that the artist's intentions are apparent in the work, MA intentionalists also claim that in order to access artist's intentions viewers can use other supplementary sources other than only looking at the painting, like reading the title, the artist's diaries, biography, interviews or statements, cultural background surrounding the painting and so on. In this chapter, I will examine the degree of appearance of the artist's intentions in painting and to what degree the viewer can grasp them based on the representation of the painting. To approach this – further to the exploration of inspiration, desire and experimentation – it is important to examine in the first part what an artist may do when she makes a painting as this will help better understand whether her intentions are apparent in her work. In the second part, there is a presentation of some of Anscombe's speculations over the issue of the manifestation of intention through action and eventually some examples which aim to examine to what degree a viewer can grasp intentions based on their appearance in painting. The last section of the second part discusses the appearance of the artist's intentions in her work – and therefore her success in representing them – with relation to the value of painting when those intentions are not apparent in the work.

I.

Some remarks about what an artist does when she makes a painting

Along with the artist's states and actions discussed in the previous chapter, an artist may also wish to paint for several other reasons like representing, understanding, exploring, creating, combining, making something present, formulating through pigments or bringing forth a new picture, agony, pain, suffering and so on. She creates in order to understand the world and to make sense of certain things. She is deeply concerned with inner perceptions and intuitions and has a desire to reach truth. In her effort to reach that, she practically uses methods, materials, means and processes. Among others, she practices imagination, creativity, ingenuity, insight and originality. An artist sometimes has conscious intentions and other times she is not aware of what she will do or how her work will develop. She is surrounded by states like spontaneity, desire, inspiration and experimentation and she can be intrigued and motivated by anything. It is very important to emphasize that for the artist, making a painting can be for pure enjoyment and pleasure, sharing, exploration, experience or torment. She has questions, is curious, is seeking something and sometimes painting may help her to gain knowledge and understanding of the world and of herself. She creates, designs and reconstructs the world. She explores how parts of the world interrelate and examines how our perceptions of the world are structured. She visualizes, she is the creator of new pictures, either pictures of the directly visible world or of her mind; she shows how she perceives the world. There is creativity and plasticity in the process of making her work. She experiments and uses material in her own way in order to produce painting and in order to make sense of that which she wishes to explore or show.

Now let us we examine the issue of what an artist may do when she paints more specifically. There are cases where the artist while painting might consciously wish to communicate something to her viewers and thus try to make her intentions as apparent as possible. Thus, sometimes intentions are easily detected. There are other cases where she consciously thinks that what she paints might be difficult for the viewer to understand and she is uninterested about changing her mind to paint it otherwise in order to be more easily understood. So it seems that sometimes it is difficult to say the intentions by just looking. At other times, what viewers will understand may not even cross her mind at the time she paints. Here, we emphasize the last two cases.

These observations suggest that sometimes the artist is so powerfully captivated by the creative process and the pleasure this brings with it that she may not change either her concept or the way she explores it (the medium and her skill) in order to make the end-result (the painting) more easily accessible to the viewers. This does not imply that it can never be the case that the artist wishes to communicate something to her viewers and to consciously pursue that. Sometimes it can be the case that if she wants to explore something she will most probably not change the process she explores it in order to make it more accessible to the viewer. This takes place for the reason that the artist is usually strongly concerned about how things are firstly represented to her and how she understands them and then about how they are represented to viewers (this is deeply due to the factor of process).¹²

To clarify the above contention, we use the following analogy between the artist and the philosopher. Like the artist, the philosopher can make philosophy because she wishes to

¹² The issue of process is discussed in detail in chapter 5.

explore something, to understand the world, search truth (and thus to represent things to herself) and because she may find pleasure and importance in it. A plausible difference between the two practices is that in producing philosophy, by contrast to making a painting, the philosopher puts more emphasis on manifesting her intentions since her only tool is language (there is specific sense which she cannot distort or use a variety of techniques like i.e. in painting or poetry, despite the fact that poetry uses language too) and if she wishes to be understood by readers she will have to be clear and develop her syllogism as explicitly as possible. For instance, the artist can be drunk or drugged when producing a painting which she aims to exhibit, but the philosopher is just not drunk when she writes or edits work for publication. Otherwise, her readers will not be able to properly understand her work. In poetry, despite the fact that the only tool is language, there is more flexibility with regard to understanding the meaning of it than in reading a philosophical text. A poet can more easily escape language than a philosopher. In a sense, a philosophical text cannot be understood as one likes, therefore, this may prompt the philosopher to wish to express her intentions with more clarity and to change what she writes in order to make her work better understood by readers. Conversely, the artist may ignore her intentions for the sake of leaving something she instantly made the way it is because she simply likes it. The philosopher wishes to be understandable by someone else. For the philosopher it is more difficult to follow this path because if what she likes does not act in accordance with her intentions and syllogism then readers will have difficulties in understanding her work. This does not assume that the philosopher wants to communicate her ideas more than the poet. She just wants to be as clear and specific as possible so that she avoids misunderstandings or misinterpretations of her work which may

later put her in position to further justify her arguments. The poet seems to be happy to communicate her ideas, but in case they are not very clear in the work this does not seem to concern her as much as it is evident from previous artists' testimonies. This analogy suggests that the artist has more independence to avoid expressing her intentions explicitly or to be uninterested about doing so because she is not committed to deliver her viewers what she exactly intends to explore. Painters do not have to overly explain themselves like philosophers.

In the realm of art history there have been many artists who were consciously not concerned about how their work would be understood or whether it would be understood according to their intentions. For example, for the abstract expressionists, explanation, analysis or interpretation of the image represented in the painting was 'none of the artist's business: his only obligation was to project the 'significant images' (Read 1991, p. 263). Abstract expressionists believed that the task of the artist was to produce a painting which had a life of its own and was independent from its maker. These instances highlight the fact that those artists were not (always) concerned with making pictures whose meaning would be apparent to the viewers, it seems that their utmost concern was to first make a picture for themselves and then for the others. Along the same lines, Frank Stella stated that his work does not need further justification, it simply exists – 'it is just there' – and the viewer perceives the painting only on the basis of what is there, without searching for any other kind of meaning (Read 1991, p. 294). His statement does not prompt viewers to further search for meanings other than the ones in the representation itself. This hints at the fact that his making process is done in his way unbiased from the fact that his work might be difficult to be perceived by viewers.

The above remarks about some of the artist's states, actions and attitude toward the making of her work are rehearsed to help understand that the artist is not always interested in making her intentions apparent and that in fact it is difficult for the viewer to discern some of her intentions based only on their appearance. This will be analyzed in the following sections after an examination of the identification of intentions. After this speculation about what an artist does then we move on to examine how the viewer reaches artistic intentions and how intentions are made apparent in painting.

II.

How does the viewer grasp intention and to what extent are artist's intentions manifest in painting?

The MAI line of art interpretation in attempting to answer the question of how do we identify artist's intentions seems to state that firstly we can know them by reading the text, in the case of literature, since it is the author who tells the story and decides what happens in it.¹³ Secondly, it claims that an interpreter can use supportive sources like artist's diaries, interviews, biography and so on which can help illuminate artistic intentions. Therefore, a viewer within MAI assumes that in painting she can reach artist's intentions by looking at it as intentions are made apparent in it by the artist who decides about the painting's representation and by getting acquainted with supportive sources. To examine the question to what degree the viewer can grasp the artist's intentions based on their appearance in painting we will firstly consider Anscombe's attitude about how it is possible to understand an agent's intentions and then we will explore how the viewer reaches the artist's intention by reflecting on some examples of painting which aim to illuminate the

¹³ Here, we use an example from literature to make an analogy with painting because most MAI views are maintained within this genre.

degree intentions are apparent to the viewer. I use Anscombe's view here because I suggest that MAI method of interpretation is based on such a model. As was proposed in chapter 3 the interpretation of everyday actions does not function in the same way as the interpretation of artistic intentions.

1. Anscombe: intentions are obvious through intentional action

Anscombe claims that if we are asked to describe what someone is doing, then we commonly offer a list of her intentional actions, which are often evident to us and do not need any special verification and that most of the intentional actions we ascribe to someone will also provide that person's intentions (2000, pp. 7-10). This approach puts forward that intentions are identifiable through the agent's actions. That is to say, if we observe that someone is watching a film, then it will normally be true of her that she intended to watch a film or intends to be watching a film. Specifically, she states:

“Well, if you want to say at least some true things about a man's intentions, you will have a strong chance of success if you mention what he actually did or is doing. For whatever else he may intend, or whatever maybe his intentions in doing what he does, the greater number of the things which you would say straight off a man did or was doing, will be things he intends” (p. 8).

From this quote it seems to be clear that an agent's actions show what she intended or is intending to be doing. Therefore, by accepting Anscombe's view of intentional action (as it has been presented in chapter 3, section 2) it entails our being able to infer what someone has intended based on her behavior and on what she has acted upon.

Additionally, she claims that actions can be intentional under one description but not under another (p. 29). For example, to determine that a physical movement is intentional is to

determine that the specific physical movement satisfies a certain description. This raises the question ‘When is a description of an action intentional?’ Sometimes it can be the case that there are various descriptions of an action and one action described in many ways (pp. 45-47). For instance, let’s think of an artist who paints green dots on the canvas. It is possible that the following descriptions relate to her action: ‘she is using green’, ‘she is painting dots’, ‘she is using a lot of thinner’, ‘she is making the canvas deteriorate’, ‘she is undertaking a project for a class’. All these descriptions can be true and can describe her action, but the question remains ‘under which of all these descriptions is her action intentional?’ According to Anscombe’s criteria it can be conceded that a description of the artist’s action is intentional if a) she has non-observational knowledge and b) if the question ‘why’ has application to her action by being so described. The action is intentional under the first description but not under the second. That is because if she is asked ‘why are you making the canvas deteriorate?’ and she replies ‘I was not aware I was doing that’ (because of the use of a lot of thinner) then the question ‘why’ refuses application.

Anscombe asserts that the above example does not involve many actions but one action under many descriptions. Thus, according to this syllogism, the artist executes one action that can be described as ‘she is painting dots’ or ‘she is using green’ and it is plausible to say that she has one intention by executing four or five acts which correspond to many descriptions. At this point it may seem likely to say that her intention in painting is to use green, paint dots and to submit the painting to her class. One difficulty that arises here is that it can also be the case that the artist intended to paint this work to later participate in a

competition. Anscombe cites that when there are cases like this then the application of further description can be explained by ‘wider circumstances’ that are outside her action. That is, by painting green dots counts as participating to a competition. Anscombe’s account appears to encompass a variety of actions under one action and it is not exactly specified which of these actions are truly intentional and which are accidental. For example, she would categorize the action of the deterioration of the canvas under the same description of painting green dots while the deterioration is not intentional, it is rather the result of using a lot of thinner. At this point it seems hard to define or know what falls under the class of ‘wider circumstances’ and therefore it seems possible to suggest that sometimes an intention can be interior and the artist’s actions do not always reveal her true intentions. What this view amounts to is that Anscombe seems to suggest that intentions can be identified through action; based on this view and on MAI, the artist’s intentions are accessible through her actions that are apparent in the painting. The example of appearance below will elucidate the claim in more detail.

2. Detectability of intentions in painting

As has been mentioned in the previous chapter, when artists make painting sometimes they have intentions and sometimes they do not intend something specific or they get involved in making art without being fully consciously. Two positions are held in this section: (1) sometimes intentions are easily detected by the viewer and (2) it is sometimes difficult to say the artist’s intentions by just looking. Position (1) will not be discussed because such cases do not constitute difficulties for MAI; I will only focus on position (2). I propose that even when artists have conscious intentions (or experience other states mentioned above like inspiration and desire) it is still sometimes hard to access them. Intentions are part of

the artist's mind and despite the fact that sometimes they are clear to her, there are cases where they are not apparent or detectable in the work. Here, it is argued that what a painting shows may not necessarily be what the artist intends to show. It may be the case that what is not shown is what the artist intends, therefore, her actions in the painting (through the form of representation) do not necessarily or always show her intentions. In MAI context, Carroll claims:

Biographical data, in other words, can play a role in hypothesizing the artist's intention, while the recognition of the artist's intention, in turn, constrains the kinds of satisfactions, and, correspondingly, the kinds of interpretations we may advance in respect to artworks. Not only is authorial intention derivable from artworks; authorial intention – and biographical information – are relevant to the realization of the aims, particularly the conversational aims, we bring to artworks (2004 p. 288).

The idea behind this is constituted by the following possible instances, which are centred on the notion of absence, and assumes that is difficult to describe the conscious absence of certain intentions based on the representation of painting. For instance, it is possible for an artist to intend to paint the absence of a lily by painting a tulip in which case only the tulip is apparent while the absence of a lily is what constitutes the artist's intention. Or let us say a painting contains blue, black and white. In such a case, the artist consciously intends not to use red and yellow. Despite her fully conscious intention not to use red and yellow, this intention is not apparent in the painting despite the fact that the work does not contain red and yellow (neither does it contain green, orange, purple and so on). Having looked at this painting a viewer can easily assume, based on the MAI framework, that the artist's intention is to only use blue, black and white, since this is what is apparent through the representation of the painting. It would be less likely for the viewer to assume that the artist's intention was specifically to not use red and yellow (as there are other colours like

pink, grey, brown and so on). Within MAI, presence and appearance of elements is what shows intentions, not their absence. According to this scheme, the viewer looks at the painting and according to what it represents she makes conjectures about the artist's intentions. As we have seen, this might not always be the case, and as a result the viewer may make conjectures about intentions that have not taken place. Those are part of the artist's mind and might not result in any action, or the action in the painting might not reveal the intention. Hence, it is somehow innocuous not to (appropriately) rely on the artist's intentions because the representation allegedly shows them. This suggestion does not deny that reliable judgments about artist's intentions are possible to make, since I endorse that position (1) is possible, rather it implies that since it is hard to sometimes discern the artist's intentions then these should not constitute the foundation of interpretation.

It has to be accepted that there are cases like the above where some of the artist's intentions are never shown in the work and so do not determine the work's meanings. Therefore, sometimes for a viewer to know what the artist's intentions are and that they are apparent in the work she has to associate them with what the artist herself has said in statements or diaries, or subordinate them with a critic's conclusion based on some source derived from the artist. In the context of MAI Carroll argues that:

“Interpretations of artworks should be constrained by our knowledge of the biography of the historical artist and our best hypotheses about the artist's actual intentions concerning the artworks in question. Thus, I maintain that authorial intentions and biographies are relevant to the interpretation of artworks” (1997 p. 305).

According to the above assertion, through supportive sources, the viewer can find out whether or not the artist's intentions are truly apparent in the work. In a way she has to find out whether there is a correspondence between what is shown on the work and what is spelt out in sources like statements, diaries, notes, letters and so on. This suggests that the viewer has to do something more than just look at the work. In order to really know that intentions are the ones that are represented in the work she has to 'check' in a sense with another source to confirm if those are true and eventually if they are apparent in the work. Without such resources, it is sometimes difficult to know whether or not intentions are actually embodied in the work by just being reliant on the appearance of the work. This implies that intentions might not always be apparent by their own in painting so the viewer has to do further reading or research outside the work in order to identify them. MA intentionalists claim that artist's intentions are apparent in the work, or they should be, and because of that the viewer can identify them and thus interpret the work accordingly. This leads to the conclusion that if MA intentionalists believe that intentions are apparent through the representation of the work then recourse to complementary sources seems to be contradictory.

The second reason for challenging the MAI view that intentions are apparent in the work is centred on the conception of the artist's desire to paint and to paint for pleasure and as a result on the conception of automatism. It is quite likely that these states undermine the position that a painting's representation shows the artist's actions and intentions. In view of these states, the notion of the appearance of artist's intention seems to be doubtful, at least in the kind of the example discussed above. Those states that have been analysed in the

previous chapter in order to give a glimpse into the artist's states when she paints are used here to propose that since painting is sometimes executed for the artist's desire to paint and to paint for pleasure, such states (conceived of as intentions) are difficult to discern in the painting's representation itself. It is hard to see how the intention to feel pleasure can plausibly be counted as part of the meaning of the work since it is not apparent. For the artist it is meaningful because she has experienced this in a certain way, but it might not be meaningful for the viewer since she cannot detect this in the work. The viewer looks at the finished work and thus the absence of the pleasure of process which counts as meaning and intention for the artist, may not count so for the viewer as she has no means of discerning such a pleasure through the representation of the work.

I do not claim that the viewer can never spot or understand the artist's intentions or that those intentions can never be apparent in painting because intentions are wholly private. I rather suggest that sometimes it is hard to grasp the artist's true intentions only by looking at the painting and by other surrounding documents. This does not imply that the artist's mental states are unique to her and that she only can have them as the solipsist does. It means that sometimes intentions – which cover a broad range of states as proposed throughout – are difficult for the viewer to access only through the representation of painting and sometimes by supportive sources. The ways a viewer can grasp painting in cases like that is discussed in the following chapter.

3. The artist's success and the value of painting

Here, I will discuss to what degree the artist's intentions are apparent to the viewer by using an example from literature as an analogy for painting. In this section I criticize EAI,

some MA intentionalists. This involves a case where some part of the audience deliberately – while knowing the author’s stated intentions – decides not to accept them and therefore have a different interpretation of the work. Through this discussion I will suggest that in cases where intentions are not apparent, that works are still valuable and interpretable.

Nikos Kazantzakis’s novel *The Last Temptation* has produced highly controversial and divergent interpretations among readers. It has been characterized as godless, immoral and offensive by some sections of the public, even when Kazantzakis himself has said that he means the very opposite of what his opponents claim. The public’s judgment of immorality is incompatible with the author’s stated intentions and disagrees about the basic content of the work and for that reason disagrees about the morality. His account was that his work is engaged with metaphysical and existential concerns and that by no means did he intend the novel to be immoral or to offend religion. His own statement was: “You gave me a curse ... I give you a blessing: may your conscience be as clear as mine and may you be as moral and religious as I” (Bald 2006, p. 180). Through this case it seems that sometimes even the statement of the artist itself is ignored by the audience and that the author’s role in the understanding of such works becomes less relevant for the audience who has a different interpretation. In cases like this the artist gives an explicit statement (the true intentions) which is ignored by the audience who favour their own interpretation. While EAI supports the logical equivalence of artistic intentions with a text’s meaning, this example seems to create a difficulty for EAI since the author’s formal statement for his work is consciously ignored by the public. This seems to disagree with Hirsch’s view. According to him, the meaning of a text “is, and can be, nothing other than the author’s meaning” (p. 216) and

the meaning of a text is “determined once and for all by the character of the speaker’s intention” (1967 p. 219).

This also conflicts with the following statements made by Iseminger:

“If exactly one of two interpretive statements about a poem, each of which is compatible with its text, is true, then the true one is the one that applies to the meaning intended by the author” (1996 p. 320).

and

“The next question is in what mode those intentions would play that role, if they played it at all, and the alternatives under consideration (and, so far as I can see, the only live options) are that the relevant intentions are the speaker’s actual intentions or those most reasonably attributed to the speaker” (p. 324).

The quotations by Hirsch and Iseminger, Hirsch being EA intentionalist and Iseminger MA intentionalist, seem to converge to some degree since both claim that the author’s intentions entail the true meaning of a text. This points toward the following considerations about the artist’s success and the value of painting. The first crucial question that arises is: does this part of the audience who does not adopt the author’s intentions have a nonsensical or meaningless interpretation of the work? As we will see in chapter 5 there are alternative ways to receive a work in cases like this. The second issue is that through the above statements it is implied that in some cases when an artist’s intentions are not apparent in the work that the artist is unsuccessful in realizing them and thus her statement does not give ground to the viewer for meaningful interpretation. For Hirsch and Iseminger, it appears that the artist has to be successful in representing her intentions in her work, as the work is going to be the means through which intentions are made apparent. It is implied by their claims that cases of unsuccessful completion of intentions entails that

viewers' interpretations are non-appropriate because they do not comply with the artist's intentions since those are not achieved and therefore are not part of the work. This is true for EAI but it also seems to be true in Iseminger's version of MAI since he says that in the case when there are two compatible true interpretations of a work, then the true one is the one intended by the artist, implying that the other one is in a way less true because it is not informed by the artist's successful intentions. This position seems to sometimes obligate the artist to success or failure depending on whether or not her intentions are fulfilled in the painting (like in the example of Kazantzakis). There are other ranges of cases of MAI where this example would not appear as a difficulty, but in this version of Iseminger I think it does.

This approach leads us to the assumption that EAI and this version of MAI run the risk of devaluing both the artist and work since according to it intentions have to be apparent in it in order for the viewer to grasp them and failure to grasp them leads to a non-appropriate interpretation. Knowing the artist's intention and evaluating on these grounds whether an interpretation is appropriate or non-appropriate, and based on this, evaluating whether an artist is successful or not in representing her intentions, can be a parochial position to hold. On reflection, it seems that especially EAI and to a less degree MAI reduce art making simply to a practice of transferring intentions and interpretation in this context ultimately measures the 'success' of an artist in the (limited) terms of the execution of her intentions. This raises two further important questions: (a) Is art making only a process of executing intentions and (b) What if the artist fulfills her intentions and is satisfied by her work and her intentions are apparent to her but not to the viewers? In other words, why should a work be valuable if the artist's intentions are not detectable or visible in it? The first

question has been discussed in chapter 3 where we examined some states the artist undergoes while painting. Below we are concerned with the second question.

If we accept the view that when intentions are not apparent in the work that the artist has been unsuccessful in realizing her intentions – and thus viewers cannot understand it – it looks as if we assert that such a painting has no value. At this point I will be referring to semantic intentions since those can fail or cannot always be easily detected by contrast to categorical intentions which rarely seem to fail.¹⁴ Let us approach the issue by bearing in mind the following possibilities: (a) Kazantzakis failed to execute his intentions in the eyes of the readers and thus readers interpret the work differently (or according to EAI and this version of MAI non-appropriately) and (b) he succeeded in executing his intentions according to his own criteria. Either of these two possibilities has led to the creation of that text. If we consider the first case in the EAI and this version of MAI then the work's value is questioned because intentions are not apparent and thus the artist has failed to successfully express them. The second question has no application since intentions are not identified by readers but regarding MAI this brings the following concern. It is an important issue to examine as it will help approach the question in play: 'What if the artist fulfills her intentions and is satisfied by her work and her intentions are apparent to her but not to the viewers?'

Let us assume that Kazantzakis really failed to make his intentions apparent to the readers. This does not discredit the fact that to himself his intentions have been fulfilled and that the

¹⁴ Later in this section I will refer to a case where categorical intentions are not clear.

work is valuable for him. We have no substantial grounds to claim that the work is of no value either for him or viewers (the criteria for what constitutes a valuable work are difficult to be defined).¹⁵ For Kazantzakis, his work seems to be valuable because through it, as he stated, he has explored metaphysical and existential concepts. Thus, to himself he represented what he wished. This assumes that what the artist thinks or wishes to communicate when she produces her work, if anything, and whatever her mental state is, might not be evident in the work in the way she intends. This echoes the previous discussion of inspiration, desire and experimentation, intentions, states and actions which are inexorably related to the creation of a work but which most of the times are not apparent in the finished work. Despite that, they are part of the work and they count as meaningful to the artist. This in itself makes the work valuable at least for Kazantzakis. If in the process of writing his novel and at the end of writing it he felt that he understood what he wished to explore then his work is valuable for him. The fact that an audience interprets a work that is not with accordance to his intentions does not render him as failed or unsuccessful in accomplishing what he intended. I argue that the artist need have no commitment toward the viewer to manifest her intentions – sometimes she does so consciously or unconsciously, but that does not seem to constitute a necessary condition for the making of a work as we have seen from various artists' accounts in the previous chapter. Intentions that are not apparent in the work or intentions that have failed to be fulfilled can still be of value to the artist. That is based on the premise that art making is the product of someone's mind, someone's reason and it takes place through a process which is practically experienced by her in special ways. The contention is that when artist's intentions are not apparent in the work still the work is of value to her because of

¹⁵ In chapter 5, sections 2 and 3 there is a speculation of how a work can be valuable to the viewer.

the process of making; it is true that the process is part of the work for the artist and it is hard to deny this. This, on the other hand, is an external fact for the viewer, therefore, for her, the process is not valuable in the same way as it is for the artist; still she can experience the work in other ways and find some (or all) semantic meanings or relate it to the aesthetic as it will be discussed in the following chapter. This suggests that when intentions like these or like Kazantankis' are not apparent in the work, the work is still valuable and there to be interpreted in other ways than the ones the artist experienced.

An example that highlights the fact that works still have value even in the case when there is nothing that shows the artist's intentions is cave painting. In this example I refer to categorical intentions. Interpretation of cave painting has been a puzzling issue for critics. Critics assert that we are uncertain about what these paintings mean and why they were painted. Various interpretations say they were painted for religious or spiritual reasons, for magic or for communicating with others. We do not really know the intentions behind it for we do not have any written records that explain or describe them. All we have is representation (no exact date, name of maker or title). I think the difficulty with their 'identity' – what are they, what kind of art – is because we do not know their categorical intentions. They are of course two-dimensional and therefore can be perceived as drawings or paintings, but we not specifically know their purpose. They could be representations that should be perceived as otherwise, like graffiti, street art or some kind of primitive graphic design. In such a case it would sound one-sided to claim that since we do not have written records and information about them and their maker, that we cannot interpret them at all or that interpretation is non-appropriate and that the assumptions we make about their meaning are false. There is a distinction between not knowing what the paintings are for –

their purpose – and not being able to respond to the potential for understanding or pleasure they afford. It is true that we do not know what purpose they served for, but at the same time they are real objects in the world and thus they can be contingently interpreted and understood either meaningfully or in terms of the pleasure they afford.

Conclusion

The plausible actions on the part of the artist and the plausible interpretations of the viewer are rehearsed above in order to show that it is hard for the viewer to access the artist's intentions and interpret painting based on the premise that they are apparent. Painting might put forward a revelation about the world; it shows a part of reality. The understanding of this revelation is a task that the viewer has to undertake sometimes without the help (the intentions) of the artist. The painter for instance, in the first place, may not find meaning in the picture she represents but in the thing itself; she has a thought of an object to depict that precedes her painting. She may not care about the final representation or the meaning the painting will have for the viewer. She might be interested in the thing she decides to analyse through the making of the work. She may need to understand what she depicts and so she (re)-creates its picture; drawing not only on the directly visible world but also on the world of her imagination. When she creates, besides attaining the goal of representation, she has other intentions that matter to her, such as reaching a state of euphoria, completion, pain, the mastery and understanding of herself and of the world. These states are difficult for the viewer to access by just looking at the work.

CHAPTER 5

Knowing an artist's intentions and understanding painting

This chapter is concerned with the examination of the issue whether knowledge of an artist's intentions entails understanding of painting. The crucial worry is revolved around the question: is interpretation a correspondence between what the artist intends and what the viewer understands? The following arguments as a whole propose that knowledge of the artist's intentions is neither a necessary nor sufficient condition for the understanding of painting. That is, understanding painting is different from understanding what the artist intends – understanding the artist's intentions and understanding a painting can comprise two different situations. The chapter consists of three sections which aim to show that artist's intentions – for gaining understanding of that which she wishes to understand through the making of her work – do not always result in a useful understanding on the part of the viewer. The first section examines Gericault's intentions in the *Raft of the Medusa* and to what extent they constitute valuable ground for the viewer's understanding of the painting, through an analysis of the nature of medium and its use by the artist. The second section explores the contention that MAI seems to promote a special kind of viewer in a special kind of situation when it comes to interpreting painting. The third section eventually endorses an approach which expounds that interpreting painting should involve a valuable understanding that is relative to the viewer.

1. Understanding Gericault's intentions in *The Raft of the Medusa*

As it has been previously mentioned, actual intentionalists claim that in order for the viewer to have a correct interpretation of a work she has to be aware of the artist's

intentions. The argument of this section firstly suggests that the viewer may be aware of the artist's intentions, based on these intentions know what the painting is about, yet not understand it. In an attempt to approach this issue we will take as an example Géricault's painting *The Raft of the Medusa*¹⁶ which will be used in order to elucidate the following questions: what is it to *know* Géricault's intentions in *The Raft of the Medusa* and what is it to *understand* it? I aim to show that the viewer does not need to understand Géricault's intentions to understand his painting.

(i) What is it to know Géricault's intentions in *The Raft of the Medusa*?

Reading the title of the painting and other sources that provide information relevant to the painting eventually lead the viewer to know that the painting is about a raft with survivors of the wreck of a French naval frigate in 1816 (Janson & Janson 1997, pp. 676-677). On a first level, this enables the viewer to assume that having read that the painting is about this specific raft, and since the painting actually represents a raft, that she knows Géricault's intentions.¹⁷ Moreover, knowledge of Géricault's intentions can involve a search of his diaries and sketchbooks, a reading of his biography and criticism about the painting, an acquaintance with the historical events that took place during the period the painting was executed or an examination of the artistic movements of that time. All these provide a general surrounding of the painting's artistic and historic-cultural background which facilitates the viewer to create a (postulated) knowledge of Géricault's intentions. So far,

¹⁶ We will discuss this painting because it falls under the realm of figurative and realistic painting and this seems to make viewers think that intentions are more easily discerned than in the case of abstract painting.

¹⁷ The depiction of this fact *might* constitute Géricault's intentions, although one can claim that Géricault's intentions, among other possibilities, might have been to create a very big painting which depicts a public event because this would help boost his career; or, to depict something that would ultimately become historical so that his name would be remembered after his death; or, he might have intended to depict any event that includes many human figures because this might have been fashionable then. This possibility will be discussed further later on.

this approach to the question of what is it to know the artist's intentions seems to be smoothly accounted for.

(ii) What is it to understand Gericault's intentions and therefore to understand the painting?

One can argue that once we know that Gericault intended to depict the raft of the Medusa and after getting acquainted with the general surrounding of the painting's artistic and historic-cultural background, we come to the conclusion that we have the substantial material to understand the painting. However, I contend below that knowledge of his intentions does not justify an understanding as a result. Gericault's intentions, as described just above, let the viewer *know about* his intentions, that is to say what the painting looks like and surrounding documentation. This fact does not essentially commit the viewer to *understand* the painting. Knowing about intentions and all the information they bring with them give material to the viewer which can assist to her understanding of the painting, but understanding the painting itself concerns a deeper meaningful and emotional state than just knowing about the artist's intentions and what the painting is about. This kind of understanding is associated with the idea of synaesthesia discussed in chapter 1.

The discussion of these questions is with a view to doubt MAI that the true meaning of a work is the one spelled out by the artist and to suggest that knowledge of the artist's intentions is neither necessary nor sufficient for the interpretation of painting. One empirical or physical necessity for understanding a painting is the sense of sight. Nevertheless, some conceptual necessities are more difficult to define as we will see later on. In relation to this, I will argue that knowledge of the artist's intentions does not

constitute such a necessity. A necessary condition for interpretation is the ability on the part of the viewer to perceive at least one part of reality through one or more senses and to be aware of the limits of the painting. A sufficient condition may be the ability to distinguish between a painting (a work of art) and something else. This will be clarified through the following discussion on knowledge of artist's intentions and understanding of her painting.

The issue of what it is to *understand* the artist's intentions, and thus the painting, turns out to be less straightforward to answer than the first question. One of the difficulties develops in this way. For a viewer, to *know* Gericault's intentions is to know that he intended to depict the raft of the Medusa in the way he did. For a viewer, to *understand* Gericault's intentions is to understand that which Gericault hoped to come to an understanding of, or indeed did come to an understanding of, through the process of making this piece. To *understand* what he intends to understand might not be as easy for the viewer as it is to *know* what he intends. There is a significant difference between (i) reading and being aware of what the artist intends and (ii) experiencing and understanding what he intends. It seems to me that when MA intentionalists claim that the viewer should know at least some of the artist's intentions in order to have an appropriate understanding of a painting that they mean she should eventually understand what the artist intended to understand. This conclusion springs from the fact they support an objective understanding – they distance themselves from individual understandings – so it appears that they put forward an understanding that the artist has intended to understand himself too. As quoted earlier,

Iseminger claims that the true – therefore objective – interpretation of a work is the one intended by the artist.

To support the claim that to understand painting is different than understanding what the artist intends, let's suppose that Gericault, for instance, intends to understand the survivors' emotional and physical situation – that he wishes to understand their desperation, their agonising over what is going to happen next, the fact that they are seriously injured and starving. To achieve this, he creates a picture of it aiming to reach an understanding of this kind of situation. In doing this, he uses actual substance to examine and/or reach his understanding of the survivors' emotional and physical situation. Consequently, through the process of dealing with oil paint he comes to understand something about that situation. This is his tool which will lead him to understand that which he intends to depict.

The viewer, however, understands the painting through other means and lacks Gericault's use of the medium. She arrives at her understanding through her visual abilities and experience – she does not have the *experience of the medium* that Gericault has. The difference in the means that Gericault and the viewer use in order to understand the survivor's situation should not be simply neglected. The inaccessibility of the use of the medium on the part of the viewer entails that the artist's experience of understanding his intentions is different than that of the viewer. For in dealing with paint Gericault masters, practices, experiments with materials and techniques and experiences the medium in a very different way to the viewer when she looks at the work. While painting, he experiences understanding through trying to depict this situation, through painting figures, erasing and

re-painting, using pigments and colours in specific ways and techniques, through having a certain degree of expectancy of how his painting will reveal, through feeling pleasure and enjoyment or dissatisfaction at some points, by physical labour and time, in order to reach what he believes is enough for his depiction (and thus his understanding). Through this he experiences physical, emotional and meaningful understanding of the survivors' situation. Gericault may have fulfilled the intentions he set out beforehand and may have also understood additional things coincidentally through the process of production. He produces his painting and eventually his understanding of the survivors' situation through his medium. Gericault and the viewer share some means of understanding – such as visual abilities, space, time, light and so on – but they do not share the use of the medium, its practice and experimentation with it. Hence, knowledge of the fact that Gericault intended to understand the survivors' situation is not enough to make a viewer understand this in the way that Gericault did. That is because Gericault could have used other means to understand the survivors' situation. For example, he could have undergone a deep reflection on the survivors' situation without producing any work; or he could have used stone to make a sculpture of it or he could have written a poem or compose a piece of music. There are many media and ways through which he could have pursued this understanding. Even a difference in the choice of the technique or colour palette could have brought a different understanding to him. Despite all these choices, he specifically chose to undertake his understanding through painting.

This emphasizes the fact that the making of a painting – its medium and use of it – is unreservedly essential to the artist's understanding of what she depicts and as such it can

only be experienced by her. To the viewer, the making of a painting has different weight, as it can be hard for her to understand the making process (or hypothesize about it) in the way the artist does. Understanding painting through the use of medium by the artist is not apparent or accessible to the viewer through the representation of the painting. This can hardly be available or evident to the viewer even if she tries to theoretically assume it.¹⁸ This implies that the experience of making is meaningfully different on the part of the artist from the experience of interpreting on the part of the viewer and it is not enough to just know about intentions in order to understand painting. This does not imply that the viewer cannot understand a painting; the artist and viewer can understand similar things but the meaningfulness of the medium is difficult to be passed on to the viewer.

At this point it is worth lingering for a while on the notion of medium and its use by the artist in order to support the claim of this section. The medium is all an artist has in order to reach her painting. Without a medium there cannot be any work and with various media there can be diverse kinds of art. Medium is an intermediary, an in-between the artist and the in-virtue painting. Before being practically manipulated and applied, a medium is amorphous – it is a bare material in its authentic form. In virtue of skill and application techniques it can become something which can give an artist meaning and emotional insight and help her understand that which she wishes to understand. There are no limits as to what a medium is, as there can be numerous media that can be applied on a two-dimensional surface.

¹⁸ Similarly, when a spectator watches in TV a surfer riding her board on the crest of a wave she understands or experiences something about this spectacle. Her understanding though is different than that of the surfer since the surfer *actually* experiences it through her body moves, the use of her board, the measure of the wave, like speed, height and so on which affect the way she moves toward the shore.

The use of a medium is the method of its application by the artist – a technical and skilful process. It is the action taken of the material itself. The use of medium does not constitute a plain functional process which will (only) make a representation of intentions come true but is in fact a distinctive moment for the artist. It is not a super-mundane episode in the artist's process, but it is a fully potential moment that encapsulates a representation in progress that the artist cannot anticipate in advance. As it has been emphasized throughout this project, the making of a painting is not a mere transference of intentions on a two-dimensional surface by the use of a medium. The use of medium concerns a puzzling process: to master it, to actually make it produce representations, control it to a certain degree and attempt to experience its potentials and curbs involve an exceptional state. It is usually a pleasurable experience for the artist, but at the same time it can also be painful and include excruciation, unexpectedness, the awaiting of a revelation of a new representation. The use of the medium is (the) painting itself for the artist. The course of the action or how the action is executed is not always predictable. It is not the finished work that she only and foremost expects (for she does not exactly know how it will be and what it will reveal) but the process of the making of it too. She yearns for the arcane possibilities of making pictures by using pigments in various ways. There is great versatility in the use of medium and this in itself encompasses a wonderful process for the artist.

To illustrate the point better let us use an analogous example from literature, poetry in specific. When a poet intends to write a poem in order to explore the notion of harmony

she employs her tool into action, that is, language. In writing her poem she does not know the exact words and the final form of the poem until she will have used words in certain ways and combinations (the poet does not know what words she will use until she will have used them). Language is the medium and words and phrases make up the poem in the way she deals with it. A lot of poets may have very similar ideas or intentions about what they intend to explore but at the end – despite the fact that they have similar ideas and intentions and share the same tool – they do not produce the same poems. A poem as well as a painting is formed through the practice of its medium and media take their final form after they are actually manipulated in certain ways by the artist.

In support of the above claim, let us use another example like when an artist paints a still life and her intentions are to do so in a very realistic way in order to test her skills. The viewer looks at the finished painting and through it realizes that the subject is depicted in a very realistic way and therefore she is right in partly identifying and knowing the artist's intention. However, the artist's intention *to understand how to paint a still life realistically in order to test her skills* is not shown in the work despite the fact that the subject is realistically painted. The artist's use of the medium comprises the examination of an object through means of observation, pigments, skill, the perception of light, time, space and the relation of the object to her, which altogether aim to produce a realistic depiction. That for the viewer is difficult to understand. The viewer may recognize, know and understand that this is a realistically painted still life, but she cannot understand the artist's intention to understand the performance of realistic depiction of the subject through the medium and the process she undertakes. What the artist intends and what she has ultimately understood

may remain unknown to the viewer. In addition to the medium, the states an artist undergoes while painting, like inspiration, desire and experimentation are accounted as part of meaning for her but for the viewer it is difficult to argue that those states count as meaning for her.

Going back to Gericault's example, through the processing of the medium he might have understood his intentions (to understand the survivors' physical and emotional situation) and symptomatically might have also understood some of the following: he may have realized that he has become more patient than he used to be or that he is successful in depicting bodies (or the opposite) or that he does not like this kind of scene despite the fact he has depicted it, or that by painting every single bit of the painting he may have realized how many forms the human body can take, what colour and what shape bodies can have, how many expressions a face can have, how an odor can be depicted, how the odor of oil paint and the lighting conditions of his studio may have affected him while painting. Or he may have felt contentment, having learned or acquired something, or may have felt physical pain by making it. One can say that not all of this is obviously about the use of the medium as such, however, they are all unswervingly connected to it. It seems implausible to detach the artist from the use of the medium and still to have those experiences. So far, it has been advocated that some of the artist's intentions with respect to the making of her painting by the use of the medium do not contribute to the viewer's understanding.

At this point, it is important to examine whether the viewer's interpretation is confined to addressing *some* of the artist's intentions. This directs us to the examination of the notions of content and interpretation as well as to the questions what is content and how is it

created and how does it differ from interpretation. To begin with, content is the representation of objects and formal elements in painting. On the one hand, it has a material aspect, so it is the painting's substance which is created by the formal aspects aforementioned and on the other hand it is the final two-dimensional representation as it is presented to the viewer; both of these aspects are related to the artist's intentions. On *The Raft of the Medusa*, obviously there are some elements that are actually there before the viewer's eye: the specific colours, shapes, forms, arrangement of objects and figures, oil paint, techniques, use of light etc., (by contrast to the experienced process of making on the part of Gericault). For instance, the painting contains a representation of sea, a raft and human figures because the artist has intended to paint them and even in the case when she painted them unconsciously, these elements are actually there constitute true facts about the painting. This fact can be described in this way: 'in the painting there is sea, a raft and human figures'; and to some extent, certain formal aspects can be described too: 'the painting contains black and yellow, it is painted in oils, it has many curves and some straight lines and it is 491cm x 416cm'. These elements constitute the painting's content or the content of representation, which is determined by the artist. Therefore, the viewer is confined to the contents of representation, in that she cannot claim that there are no figures on the painting while there are or that there are green pears while there are not, and is also confined to categorical intentions.

The idea behind this is that Gericault determines the content of his painting, what the painting represents, and so the viewer is able to recognize that these are the contents of it and based on this to interpret the painting. For a viewer, claiming that on the painting she

sees a ship instead of a raft this would entail a wrong interpretation since the content of representation does not afford such an interpretation. Nonetheless, we should be careful not to conclude that the determination of the contents of the painting (being determined by the artist), the actual representation, manifestly bounds the viewer to the artist's intentions and hence that the contents allow for an objective interpretation. What the content of representation allows for is an objective description of it, but not an objective interpretation of it.

This suggests that content (understood as a picture's formal and representational elements), can be more fixed whereas interpretation can be more individualized, experiential and may involve parameters like how the work is both emotionally and meaningfully received in relation to the viewer. What I claim here is that the content of representation affords more as material for interpretation than what the artist determines on the painting, both emotionally and meaningfully. As just mentioned above, if the painting contains a representation of a raft, one cannot claim that it does not contain it – any claim that there is no raft in the painting will therefore be false. But if someone says 'this painting is very smoothly painted' and someone says 'this painting depicts the scene so realistically' then both statements can be relatively true to the viewer since judgement about the way the contents are depicted might also be part of interpretation. The feeling of pleasure, beauty or awe or admiration of the artist's mastery can be part of interpretation as well. Those interpretations do not relate to the semantic intentions of the artist to mean something through the contents of representation, they are rather associated with aesthetic interpretation which will be discussed in the following chapter. If, after having been told

that a painting contains a raft, one were to ask, ‘What is the raft like?’, it would be easy to describe: ‘It is brown and square shaped’. By contrast, when someone is told that ‘the painting is delicately depicted’ or ‘the painting reminds me of *B*’ then questions like ‘what is it to be delicately depicted?’ or ‘what is it to remind you of *B*?’ are more difficult to answer – there is a degree of vagueness in them which inhibits a universal and objective account. That is because even if someone tries to give a definition of ‘what is it to be delicately depicted’ in a more generalized and standardized definition (like a dictionary or common sense definition), it is yet more difficult to explain ‘what it is to be delicately depicted’ in relation to the painting since this is a more confiscated definition than a common sense definition.

The difference between the case of the claims ‘the raft is brown and has sort of a square shape’ and the case of ‘the painting is delicately depicted’ is that the latter statement makes a claim regarding a judgement about the way the content of representation is depicted (whether a viewer takes the painting to be depicted as such or not) and therefore is not part of the stable content as the representation of a raft is, because everybody agrees that there is a raft that is sort of square in the painting (part of the content of the painting), but maybe not everybody agrees that the painting is delicately depicted (part of the interpretation of the painting). It is also realistically and elaborately depicted as well but not everybody may agree on that. This leads to the claim that interpretation, but not content, might be that which is ‘contested’ (based on the content of representation) and that this is one way to distinguish between the two.

The above discussion establishes that the content of representation in the painting does not depend on the viewer and it might be independent and objective of how the viewer sees it. Interpretation, on the other hand, depends at least partly on the viewer because in order for a representation to be interpreted it is not a prerequisite for the viewer to receive the representation as everyone else receives it. A difficulty that arises here is that if we equate content with what is there to be interpreted (meaning that both have to be objective on the part of the viewer) we seem to ignore that the viewer is an individual entity who owns an active body with various emotions, feelings, physiological processes, specific background, experiences and particularities. This is the issue of examination of the next section. Such a case would entail all viewers reaching the same proper objective interpretation because they all have similar backgrounds and experiences. The MA intentionalist seems to equate representation with interpretation because she firstly asserts that intentions are apparent in the work (through the content of representation) so the viewer can identify them, and secondly since she emphasizes a ‘proper objective’ interpretation (true if it is compatible with the artist’s intentions). She assumes an objective interpretation that is the same for viewers and this implies that viewers stand on the same level. To that end the MA intentionalist appears to be monist.

Critical monism supports the idea that there is ‘a single, comprehensive, true (correct) interpretation for each work of art’ (Stecker 1994, p. 193). MAI seems to go along the same lines as critical monism as it accepts one interpretation of the work: the one that is compatible to the artist’s intentions. The artist might have many intentions and therefore many interpretations, but the similarity with critical monism lies in the fact that MAI is based on one way of interpreting a work which is objective and right. The difficulty with

endorsing this conception of interpretation is further examined below in connection to the issue that MAI promotes a special kind of viewer and a special kind of situation when it comes to knowledge of the artist's intentions. This is supported in relation to the issue discussed above about the fact that it is not enough to just know the artist's intentions in order to understand a painting, and that the contents of representation afford more understandings than only those intended by the artist.

2. Emotional understanding

By acting in accordance with MAI model, one comes to the conclusion that there is a special kind of viewer when it comes to interpretation. This kind of viewer is able to recognize the artist's intentions and understand the painting in the way the artist intended. She is also expected to interpret the painting objectively – in a compatible way with artistic intention – and hence individualities and emotional particularities on the part of the viewer seem to be neglected or to be of secondary importance. This leads us to the following concern. The claim for objective meaning disregards individualities and emotional particularities which are of paramount significance for the viewer since they are closely related to her idiosyncrasy and life, and thus to how she perceives painting. MAI seems to defend a process of interpretation where the viewer is detached and unbiased from her state of being. In specific, they assert that:

“Critics who say they want to enjoy the interpretive freedom offered by moderate intentionalism still deem it best to rely on information about the author's context and attitudes in establishing the text, in deciding which linguistic conventions to adopt in reading the text, and in determining the text's generic and other relations” (Mele & Livingston 1992 p. 945).

This quote suggests that while MAI is more liberal in what it allows than EAI it is still bound to the regulation of meaning by the artist. This is what leads to the conviction that MAI promotes objective meaning. In this section, I highlight the importance of emotional understanding without aiming to propose that interpretation is totally subjective and arbitrary and wholly depended on the viewer. As is mentioned in the previous section, there are true facts about painting like the content of representation which is determined by the artist. However, beyond that, there comes emotional understanding; in the context of painting interpretation emotional understanding involves the ability of the viewer to perceive the atmospheric character and the ineffable exertion of painting. This kind of understanding enfolds meaningful understanding but at the same time it compellingly encloses emotive responses. This is part of synaesthesia; it suggests that emotion is not universally experienced in an objective way and in painting interpretation it can have diverse aspects according to the viewer's idiosyncrasy. It is important to stress at this point that any kind of work of art has aesthetic properties, which the interpreter can perceive according to her perceptual and aesthetic abilities. By 'perceptual' abilities, we mean sense faculties such as sight, hearing and touch. By 'aesthetic' abilities, we mean emotional sensitivity, powers of appreciation, judgement, understanding, taste, knowledge and so on. In this section it is claimed that neither what is perceived by individual perceptual abilities nor aesthetic abilities can be fully determined by the artist's intentions. The contention is based on the fact that emotions seem to be comprised from experience and viewers do not always share the same experiences. According to Goldie:

“An emotion is a complex state, relatively more enduring than an emotional episode, which itself includes various past episodes of emotional experience, as well as various sorts of disposition to think, feel, and act, all of which can

dynamically interweave and interact. What holds these diverse elements together is their being part of a narrative” (2002, p. 11).

That is to say, an emotion is complex since it comprises various elements like bodily changes, thoughts, perceptions, feelings, dispositions, consciousness, and experiences. It is also episodic and dynamic in the sense that it ‘comes and goes’ and depends on a variety of factors related to our dispositions and aspects of our life. Lastly, it is structured because our life has a narrative structure; it involves a sequence and unfolding of actions and events, feelings and thoughts that are connected from our point of view (pp. 12-13). This suggests that viewers’ emotional states involve complex individual situations rather than a universal emotional state directed by the artist. Namely, every viewer has her own history of events, experiences and characteristics, which affect her emotional encounters with painting and this as a result may hinder an objective emotional state intended by the artist.

It can be possible that some emotions can be aroused that the artist did not intend to be aroused but which contribute to the viewer’s emotional psychology and pleasure. We may look at a specific painting more than once when we feel that we gain certain pleasure from it or that it is important for us to look at either to rehearse an emotion and understanding gained the last time we looked at it or a more intense one. We look at it in different situations and at different times and therefore it is plausible that our interpretation of it varies. The specific time of each viewing can provide a different way of experiencing it. Namely, the way we look at it can differ at times according to our state of being. For instance, when we look at it when we are drunk it might reveal something different to us than when we see it after we had a long discussion about Kant’s theory of the sublime or just after we had a lecture on how we perceive truth or after something good has happened

to us. If we choose to look at the painting while smooth light comes from the window and rays of light hit some parts of it while others are really dark this is our conscious choice; the painting is still the way it used to be before but we have chosen to look at it under other conditions which can change its interpretation. These states are not part of the artist's intentions but do happen and can consciously or unconsciously affect our interpretation in many ways. As a result, it is difficult for a viewer to always be in the ideal environment and frame of mind in order to understand a painting in the way the artist intended. A viewer cannot exclude her own emotional peculiarity and history of experience in order to interpret a painting only in agreement to the artist's intentions. It can be true that viewers undergo different emotional reactions when they are under same kinds of circumstances because people differ in their emotional sensibilities. To exemplify this, in Picasso's *Guernica* a viewer who has been through a war or has lost a loved person in war will perhaps not interpret the painting in the same way as somebody who did not have the same experience. The contents of representation of the painting afford to show the tragedy of war because the artist has actually painted it, but the painting itself affords more potential revelations in virtue of each viewer's emotional particularities. This is what synaesthesia is about; beyond the fact that Picasso represented the tragedy of war and the viewer can understand that, there is something deeper that different individuals will experience according to their experience. It is something special beyond the artist's control that alerts the viewer to connect the painting with her idiosyncrasy. Synaesthesia on a first level joins understanding of the content of representation and on a second level awakens aesthetic and emotional understanding which directs to a special kind of awareness which the artist

might have not intended, since this kind of understanding is also influenced and informed by the viewer's experience.

This suggests that knowledge of the artist's intentions may not always enhance viewers' understanding in the same way, which recalls the initial claim of this chapter that the viewer does not essentially experience the same understanding as the artist. Let us consider for example, Rembrandt's *The Rich Man from the Parable*.¹⁹ This painting depicts a rich man surrounded by books, papers and some coins and it alludes to Christ's parable about the foolishness of attributing riches too much importance. Knowledge of intentions in this case entails knowledge of the parable and thus this painting falls under religious painting in a way. According to MAI position, Rembrandt's plausible intentions were to depict the rich man from the parable and hence to understand something by painting it (hypothetically to understand something himself or to represent to viewers this scene in order to stimulate an understanding of the parable). Rembrandt actually represented a rich man, and by this action he may have understood what he wished or intended; despite that, this does not entail the same understanding to viewers. My view is that this painting affords much more – especially with regard to emotional understanding – than what Rembrandt might have intended. Here, it is argued that knowledge of what Rembrandt means may not ensure or enhance the viewer's understanding of the painting. The title refers to the rich man (which is the way we come to know that this is the man from the parable) but the painting itself does not unquestionably represent this (Rembrandt does not actually represent a story about the parable of the rich man). In effect, it seems that the emotional vitality of the painting outweighs the meaning of the parable. The magnificent

¹⁹ Table of Pictures, *Figure 2*.

portrayal of light, the way it touches the surface of objects, the warmth it creates and the sensational energy it emits make a stronger case than the instructive interpretation of the parable. In fact, the parable is almost unnoticeable because of the abundance of the emotional dynamism that penetrates the painting. It seems that the parable itself is not emphasized as much as the sensual use of colours and light. For this reason, the viewer is not forcefully involved with the meaning of the parable itself – as actual intentionalists would assume – but is more captivated by the painting's emotional aspects. The viewer can use this emotional and meaningful affordance in order to valuably relate the painting to her.²⁰ This leads us to the following section.

3. Appropriate and non-appropriate interpretation

Further to the claim that painting enfoldes emotional understanding which might not always be part of the artist's intentions, this section holds that knowledge of artistic intentions being taken as the standard of appropriateness of meaning can neglect the fact that painting affords more than what an artist intends and the viewer is held back from finding more meanings and understandings in it, which may be of value in relation to her. The difference of the contention here from the one expounded in the previous section is that interpretations which have value for the viewer can be accepted even when she fails to identify the true artist's intention and thus when her interpretation is non-appropriate within the MA intentionalist context.

²⁰ We should note here that the viewer can always search for the artist's intentions, not in an imperative sort of way (because she wants to identify the objective meaning that intentionalism proposes), but because she chooses to do so for enhancing meaningful understanding of the parable.

Here, I support a kind of valuable approach to interpretation. Namely, a non-appropriate interpretation can be valuable for a viewer. Viewer's interpretation does not inescapably have to do with the factual nature of the representational content of the painting (to do with how elements are actually in the painting, reflecting the artist's compositional choices) rather it can be related to her experience, resulting in an understanding that is valuable to her. At this point it is essential to explain what is meant by valuable understanding. This is a kind of understanding within the synaesthesia context which helps self-awareness, an understanding that does not essentially have to do with how people in general understand painting objectively, but with how we build our understanding through our idiosyncrasy and experience, about something that is valuable to us but might not be valuable to others. This aims to emphasize that we may not be able to understand the *The Raft of the Medusa* as Gericault intended because we may not have the kind of disposition he had. The value approach to interpretation can be relativist because the relevant sort of value varies from viewer to viewer. When a specific interpretation is valuable for a viewer but not valuable for another, then it is true relative to the first viewer but not true to the second. In this context an interpretation can prove to be useful for a viewer, but still be non-appropriate according to MAI. To my view, interpretation should endorse a pluralist approach. Critical pluralism contends that there are many acceptable interpretations that do not amount to a single, correct interpretation (Stecker 1994 p. 193). For this reason, I suggest that it is differences in understanding, not merely the recognition or knowledge of what the depicted object is about – and thus only true correspondence to artist's intentions – that can make interpretation fruitful.

Let's speculate how different viewers with different backgrounds would valuably respond to *The Raft of the Medusa*. An engineer could see it as an examination of the raft's structures, a physicist as an investigation of how light works, a psychologist as a representation of how human conditions develop in such situations, a fisherman as to how the sea reacts. In each case the viewer perceives the painting in different valuable ways which are governed by her background, her potentials and her general disposition of mind and body. Each of these interpretations can be valuable to the viewer depending to the extent they enhance her understanding. While MAI can be conceived in some cases to offer a pluralistic attitude, the ranges of sources a viewer can use to reach several interpretations spring only from artistic sources.

“Sometimes the author's semantic intentions are less limited than the meanings a reader may be able to dream up on the basis of the text and other background evidence. Sometimes interviews and diaries open up all sorts of wonderful undiscovered meanings” (Livingston 1998 p. 844).

This assumes that when interpretations are many and different they are still bound within the artist's context. While MAI accepts that artistic intentions are occasionally less limited than what a reader can imagine, it refers to ‘wonderful undiscovered meanings’ which derive from artistic interviews and diaries. It does not offer other ways for interpretability like speculating on the painting's value in relation to the viewer. For instance, if we are to examine the question ‘What is the relation of interpretation to the painting?’ and ‘How does the painting arrive at interpretation?’ perhaps we would reply that the relation and arrival in question are established by the viewer. The artist who is the maker of representation can only partly establish what an interpretation affords; if not at least partly established by the viewer then we are led to the question of what would be the ontological importance of interpretation, why would it be undertaken in the first place by other people

other the maker herself. It should be highlighted that for the artist the making of the representation is practiced by her, solely by her as discussed previously; however, interpretation is not solely practiced by her so there should be a share to the viewer to practice interpretation which is informed by her experience and disposition and as to how valuable it is for her. This proposes that the viewer's idiosyncratic involvement is vital.

This leads to a further question: 'Why do we perform interpretation?' I would say we do so because we want to make sense of painting *in relation to us*, because it helps us understand something that is valuable to us. If it simply offers us an understanding that someone else had which does not make us react in a valuable way then it is difficult to claim that interpretation is valuable in the first place. For a viewer to value a painting implies a special kind of understanding which is different from the understanding she gains from other situations or objects of the world. Understanding a painting in relation to the viewer can be the value itself of the presence of a painting to the viewer and it is difficult to argue that such a concept of value is universally and objectively perceived.

Before proceeding to explaining the above contention, we should note that the viewer draws on several sources of knowledge when contemplating a painting. As previously stated, these will include reading criticism, reading about the artist's intentions, the cultural background of the work, time, place, title and so on. Other sources may be individually particular, like for example our background, experience, insight, our senses and perceptive abilities, faculties of recognition and sensitivity. From a phenomenological standpoint we could say that at least to some degree we understand painting through our experience and intuition. Intuition is a special faculty of perception which brings knowledge and intuitions

and can be thought of “as theoretical hunches of a sort; that is unrefined, relatively spontaneous beliefs that something is (or is not) the case” (Moser, Mulder & Trout 1998, p.111). A statement of an intuition does not meet any significant standard of evidence or appropriateness. It is typically expressed in a casual observation based on views about something being plausible or implausible and cannot be justified as true or not on the MA intentionalist grounds. Yet, it can be profitable for the viewer.

To defend the claim that knowledge of the artist’s intention might not provide a valuable understanding and that it may afford more than he intended, we will ponder on the following instance. It has been reported that Gericault chose to produce *The Raft of the Medusa* because he wished to attract public interest (an ambitiously big painting which concerned a political theme of the time and which was not commissioned). This is claimed to have been at least one of his intentions.²¹ If this was indeed his primary intention then one can contend that this information is not valuable to the viewer with regard to understanding the work and furthermore that it is not apparent in it. This information might not be of value since by knowing that Gericault’s main intention was to concern himself with depicting a current political issue because he was ambitious and wished to attract public interest, this in itself is a superficial kind of understanding, and therefore not valuable (despite its being valuable for Gericault). To know this intention neither contributes to a meaningful nor an emotional understanding of the painting. This only appraises information that in itself is interpretationally insignificant. By this, I argue that there must be something deeper to meaningfully and emotionally understand through the painting. For example, the large size of it may contribute to its aesthetic value as perceived

²¹ http://www.louvre.fr/llv/activite/liste_parcours.jsp?bmLocale=en

by the viewer even though Gericault's intention regarding the size was to gain public attention (and not to cause certain aesthetic feelings). For that reason, knowledge of the artist's intentions in such situations does not provide any constructive ground for a valuable understanding. A worthy route to reaching an understanding of the work in this case is for the viewer to seek other meanings that are valuable to her by relating the work to her experience. This process is approached as follows.

Focus on the artist's intentions may, in turn, lead to an excessive focus on knowledge about specific things (such as the fact that this painting represents a raft and that it is made to gain public attention) as opposed to the understanding of something in/through the work which valuably relates to the viewer's experience. Concentration on this kind of knowledge can have either positive or negative results for her. A positive result can be that it gives the viewer a glimpse into what the work is about and therefore may help her understand it by trying to understand the artist's intentions. A negative result might be the one just mentioned above (where knowledge of the fact that Gericault wished to produce a very big painting for reasons of personal advancement is not useful) and also the fact that once the viewer knows and understands what Gericault intends, she may not be prompted to understand the painting in relation to herself (how the interpretation of the painting can be of value to her).

Some possible alternative ways to understand the painting can be the following. Among others, a viewer can concentrate on specific details of the painting and relate them to oneself; this concentration and relation to oneself is not usually conscious but takes place

automatically while the viewer looks at the work. For instance, in the detail where an old man holds in his hands the naked body of another man who is either dead or has lost consciousness, preventing him from falling in the water, can catch the viewer's attention. This may prompt her to think she can become more sympathetic with other people or to even alert her to the fact that she can do so. Or it may awaken feelings of personal loss or of fear of such situations; or provide encouragement to keep going whatever the misery of the situation, or it may suggest that at the end of such a desperate situation there is still hopefulness. Another possibility of understanding that a viewer may experience is that she has become alerted to the fact that this event is possible (like for example that wretchedness is a possible state in life, something that she may have or may have not thought before). These meanings might go beyond the understanding Gericault gained through his intentions, but the painting seems to afford them and therefore the viewer can valuably relate them to her understanding.

For that reason, there can be cases where artistic intentions distract the viewer from aspects of meaning that relate to her own experience (like Gericault aiming at ambitiousness) and which as a result are non-intentional on the part of the artist (i.e. it is not Gericault's intention that the viewer relate this to her experience and so feel more sympathetic towards others); in cases that for a viewer this constitutes a valuable understanding it can be accepted. My argument here consists of three positions: (1) there are artistic intentions that are relevant to artist's understanding (like Gericault aiming at ambitiousness) and (2) intentions that are relevant to both artist and viewer (like the depiction of a wretched

situation) and (3) intentions that are not relevant to the viewer (like Gericault aiming at ambitiousness).

This argument asserts that when the viewer genuinely receives certain aspects that valuably relate to her then she has a synaesthesia of the work because her interpretation is not a plain decoding of what the artist intended, but also a deeper understanding of the painting with relation to her own experience and of how this understanding is valuable to her. This, on its own, makes her understanding of the work valuable even in the case when she does not understand Gericault's intention of providing an understanding of the survivors' situation. Her understanding though, might not have been part of the artist's intentions, but of the painting itself in relation to her. Hence, interpretation can leave space for meanings that are symptomatic and this can be acceptable. Sometimes the experience of meanings can be spectral, indeterminate, changeable, mercurial, deceptive, rather than simply falling on one side of a binary definition of 'true' and 'non-appropriate'. They might not be an actual part of the contents of representation but they could be allowed if they add positively to the viewer's understanding and experience. This leads to the conclusion that sometimes it can be the case that it is more important to understand something through the work (even if it is not part of the artist's actual intention), rather than to simply know something about it (something that is generally agreed upon) without understanding it.

Conclusion

The above assumptions lead to the conclusion that there various ways to look at interpretation: (1) One way to interpret a painting is not just recovering an artist's

intentions, (2) there are many ways to interpret painting that are valuably related to the viewer and (3) there is a wrong way to interpret painting. In summary of the above three sections, knowledge might be based on a generally agreed statement that for instance ‘the painting is about the raft of the Medusa which aims to an understanding of the survivors’ physical and emotional situation’. Understanding on the other hand may involve a deeper individual reception of the fact that ‘the painting is about the raft of the medusa which aims to an understanding of the survivors’ physical and emotional situation’. This does not aim to suggest that understanding cannot be shareable or that it is unique (many people can have the same or a similar understanding of a painting); it rather aims to promote an individual connection of the painting to the viewer where the painting works as a continual entity of possibilities used in the way the viewer thinks is most resourceful and valuable to her. This implies that understanding can be more profound than knowledge. Understanding of a painting can entail the viewer realizing something for herself that might not be part of what the artist realizes. The artist realizes something for herself too but as mentioned above it is very difficult to know if these parallel understandings can ever converge and whether knowledge of the artist’s intentions would facilitate such a convergence in order to lead to understanding. On a concluding note, I suggest that the question “What did the artist intend?” can lead to the understanding of a work but at the same time it may fix the mind of the viewer on a question which simply seeks to be answered rather than understood.

CHAPTER 6

Painting and Language

In this chapter, there is a presentation of another version of MAI, the view of art as conversation which basically claims that painting interpretation works in similar ways as language understanding functions in communication. In the first part, I start with the exploration of this view and then in the second part I continue with examining to what degree this view can be applied in painting in the same way it is applied in conversation. In the course of exploring this there is an elaboration on the differences between painting and language which essentially aims to suggest that interpreting painting is not confined to a system by contrast to language interpretation. In presenting this opinion, I will sometimes use both painting and literature examples in order to help support my claims.

I.

Painting as Conversation

The most important premise in support of art as conversation is that the aim of art is communication. That is to say, an artist expresses or communicates meaning through her work which the viewer has to discover in order to have a correct interpretation. For a viewer to reach correct interpretation she has to grasp the artist's intention. In the MAI framework a standard of correctness is important because it ensures that an interpretation is compatible with artistic intentions, and thus in this way misunderstandings and ambiguity are avoided. The conception of art as communication springs from the idea that in conversation speakers have to understand each other's utterances in order to have meaningful communication. This is based on the fact that an utterance used for

communication can often have more than one interpretation, but it is what the utterer intended to convey through her utterance which is the correct interpretation of that utterance. For instance, when an utterer says *A*, but intends *B*, one should take into consideration *A* because if one focuses only on *B*, then communication is not successful. In other words, if a conversation is to keep going, then it is the utterer's intended meaning that should concern us, not just what she actually said (Davies 2006 pp. 227-228). For painting as communication then, this entails that knowledge of the artist's intention is the standard of correctness and helps viewers to avoid being distracted by incorrect meanings and misinterpretations.

A detailed account of art as communication is provided by Noël Carroll (2004) who compares works of art to conversations. Simply put, works of art are viewed as 'communications' from their artists. Carroll regards the interpreter's encounter with a work as analogous to linguistic conversation. He maintains that when we read a literary work we try to connect with its author in a similar way to when we are engaged in a conversation. In particular, he says:

“When we read a literary text or contemplate a painting, we enter a relationship with its creator that is roughly analogous to a conversation. Obviously, it is not as interactive as an ordinary conversation, for we are not receiving spontaneous feedback concerning our own responses. But just as an ordinary conversation gives us a stake in understanding our interlocutor, so does interaction with an artwork” (p. 284).

Through this statement he suggests that we have 'conversational' interests when we experience artworks. This relation is not of course as direct as with a living interlocutor because we do not get an immediate response from the work. However, there is a certain

desire for communication with the work on the part of the viewer, so our relation to a painting is like a dialogue, where we seek to understand what our interlocutor has said, or at least try to find what she wished to convey by her utterance (pp. 280-284). This develops from the idea that when we are in a conversation we feel satisfied when we understand each other; according to Carroll, in the course of a conversation there is ‘a sense of community or communion that itself rests on communication’ (p. 284). Therefore, it is a requirement of a fulfilling conversation to grasp what the interlocutor meant or intended to say. If through a conversation we are left with only our conclusions, no matter how aesthetically rich they are, then we feel that something is missing and that we have ‘neither communed nor communicated’. He claims that “serious conversations do have, as a constitutive value, the prospect of community” (p. 285). This is further supported by the contention that artist’s intentions derive from artworks and that artist’s intentions and biographical information are significant to the understanding of the conversational aims we bring to artworks. In art as conversation, communication with the artwork – and artist – is one of the leading purposes of art and thus artistic intentions are a necessary part of interpretation (p. 288). The reason Carroll puts a lot of emphasis on the communicative aspect of art reception is a result of his belief that aesthetic pleasure we gain from an artwork is not enough because our interaction with it is a kind of conversation between the artist and the viewer which involves a desire to know what the artist intends, not only out of respect for the artist, but also because we have a personal interest to be capable respondents (p. 287). In the next part, we will discuss to what degree this view applies to painting interpretation.

II.

Painting as Communication in painting interpretation

I think that the conception that art is essentially about communication is a fundamental position within MAI, since MAI is principally a theory of meaning and is considerably influenced by the notion of communication in language. The core of the argument of the following part is that interpretation might not only be about the communication of artistic intentions; communication can be one of the aspects of making and interpreting painting, however, interpretation in its entirety encompasses other essential aspects as well which are not part of the theory of meaning. This is developed out of the idea that painting and language differ in some crucial respects, most importantly, in that painting is not a formal system like language. To support the argument of this part we will examine three differentiating characteristics between painting and language: rule-boundness, aesthetic experience and non-systematicity and creativity.

(i) Rule-boundness

Language is a system of communication which is rule-bound – and committed to grammar, syntax, semantics, pragmatics and morphology, among others. In language use as it takes places in a conversation, a competent speaker has to follow a fixed structure and the formal conventions of language in order to reach a grammatically and syntactically correct utterance. The fundamental principle of the communication theory is that when we are in a conversation we aim to understand the interlocutor's intentions in order to understand what she said. According to Grice: "we may say that 'A meant something by x ' is roughly equivalent to 'A uttered x with the intention of inducing a belief by means of the recognition of this intention'" (Grice p. 384).

The theory of communication holds some truth as it concerns the fact that speakers have to understand the interlocutor's intended meaning in order to reach successful communication. My aim in this section is not to reject the theory of communication itself but to suggest that while it may be true with regard to conversation, in painting interpretation it is not always analogously applied. My claim here is that understanding painting does not work in the same way as understanding language in conversation. The main doubt about art as conversation is that it seems to imply that painting, on the part of the artist, is only a transference of intentions on a two-dimensional surface and that the artist creates only in order to communicate (this account neglects in a sense other crucial states the artist undergoes while painting such as pleasure and the states examined in chapter 3). On the part of the viewer, art as conversation suggests that interpretation is the identification of those intentions which are to be objectively perceived to a significant degree. This is discussed in the following way.

Language is a system and a system is a set of rules, it requires justification, validity, explanation, evidence and sometimes correspondence. In language, according to the communication theory, a sentence uttered by a speaker is objective (since it follows certain rules). Sentences are bearers of certain meanings and therefore, a speaker has to remain within the frame of those meanings if the conversation is to keep going successfully. That is, she is not expected to receive a sentence in a supposed way she thinks it *might be* right; she has to receive it within the confines of a linguistic system and she is not encouraged to receive it in a different way other than that offered by the speaker. According to Iseminger:

“My first claim is that the only reason for thinking that the author's semantic intentions are *in a way* determinative of work-meaning is the conviction that as readers we normally have at least some conversational interest in the work... If the author's semantic intentions in part

determine the meaning of the work, then works are standardly objects of readers' conversational interests" (1996 p. 324).

Iseminger's claim seems to suggest that since authorial semantic intentions are important in the work's interpretation that readers are expected to be conversationally interested in the work. That is to say, if they are conversationally interested then they are interested in authorial intentions in a sort of a conversational mode of the artist aiming to communicate something to the reader and as a result to encourage an objective meaning. I do not espouse the view that artists never have communicative intentions, but to claim that painting interpretation is not to be practiced in a rule-bound system that is similar to linguistic conversation – because it is art-bound – and that as the artist can unrestrictedly express herself, then the viewer has more freedom in interpreting than when interpreting language. Below we examine some examples in painting and literature which aim to show that the notion of rule-boundness in painting does not function in the same way and does not have the same kind of importance as in language. This claim is based on the supposition that in painting the viewer does not have as many 'communicative' limitations to conform to as in language because painting is not based on a formal system like language. This allows for more flexibility both to the methods a viewer uses to experience a painting and to the meaning she finds.

In order to explain what the notion of flexibility entails I will use an example of Lucian Freud's work. *Two Irishmen*²² represents two men in a room, one old man sitting and one younger man standing, both of them appear to be serious, sad and somehow pensive. One

²² Table of Pictures, *Figure 3*.

could say that the representation shows more than one possibility of meaning. The first one contesting that it represents a father with his son, both being unhappy because of a family matter. A second assumption would be that it is the boss with his employee thinking over loss of money and another could be that they are a couple and they feel hopeless because they do not want to reveal their relationship. We do not know whether Lucian Freud intended one of these three interpretations in specific or none of those, but all three of them seem to be plausible and acceptable based on the postulation that the painting's representation affords them in a sense. This suggests that in the case a viewer fails to understand Lucian Freud's true intentions, she will not encounter the same kind of complications she would in the case of conversation; in conversation the speaker's intention according to the Gricean model is what will ensure the right objective meaning (of course language communication is not only a matter of intention). But in painting interpretation the role of artistic intention does not need to be emphasized. The reason for not facing such difficulties in understanding in painting as is the case in conversation lies principally in the purposes of the two situations. In painting the purpose is not (only) to have an objective meaning while in conversation (where meaning springs from a linguistic system where words have specific sense, there are grammatical and syntactical rules, and speakers' intentions are important) speakers are expected to have objective meaning in order to ensure effective communication. This leads to the supposition that painting does not fundamentally aim to create successful communication between artist and viewer in the same way language does among speakers. It should be stressed that the purpose of painting (both on the part of the artist and viewer) might be different than that of language (among speakers) in some respects. The purpose of painting, besides communication, might be to

provide pleasure, understanding, meaning, creativity, exploration, experimentation, the attempt to factually turn a mental image or picture of reality to a material picture. The purpose of language might be to enhance communication between humans by expressing themselves through it and to carry information about the world.

At this point it is important to highlight the notion of flexibility in painting; flexibility in painting allows the artist to paint so to speak in a ‘wrong’ way or to ‘make mistakes’. A mistake deviates from what is right or accepted by a certain community. In conversation, speakers are expected to be competent to a certain degree in speaking correctly, by being in agreement with certain rules which will enable them to avoid mistakes so that successful communication is achieved among speakers. However, in the realm of painting there are many paintings with ‘mistakes’. One could say that in realistic and figurative painting there are noticeable mistakes identified even by viewers who are not artistically educated or are art connoisseurs. There is an abundance of such examples, like disproportionate parts of the body or other elements on the painting, wrong use of perspective, light and shading. Here, we mention only a few: Ingres’ *Odalisque*²³ represents a nude woman having disproportionately elongated bodily features and the upper part of the body seems to be shorter in proportion with the lower part of the body; Matisse in *The Red Studio*²⁴ uses wrong perspective. With regard to contemporary painting the notion of mistake becomes even more diminished; in abstract painting²⁵ it is very difficult to discern a mistake because it is largely non-figurative or non-realistic and thus in this case the notion of mistake nearly

²³ Table of Pictures, *Figure 4*.

²⁴ Table of Pictures, *Figure 5*.

²⁵ Abstract art does not give the illusion of visible reality; it is non-figurative, non-representational and non-objective and is a kind of art which is liberated from motif (Read 1991, p. 170).

disappears. Paintings by Picasso, Miro, De Kooning and many others seem to neglect (traditional) painting strategies and use asymmetry, flat representation, emphatically disproportioned elements and uncombined colours. It can be said that these are part of the paintings' meaning and that is why they are painted as such. If we assume they are part of meaning, we interpret them having in mind that despite the fact that they are 'wrongly' depicted they are still meaningful in their 'wrong' fashion and thus there is no difficulty in reaching interpretation. In a grammatically or syntactically wrong utterance it is difficult to assert that such a mistake is part of the utterance's meaning because utterances are true depending on certain linguistic rules. Here, we must note that there are deliberate and accidental mistakes in language. Deliberate mistakes like when a speaker wrongly describes a thing and accidental like slips of the tongue (there is an example of this later below). Speakers of a linguistic community usually grasp such mistakes and keep the conversation going (they do not result in unintelligibility) but speakers define those as mistakes and mistakes can occur up to a certain degree. That is, language affords some mistakes that do not disrupt intelligibility but it cannot afford as many as painting. There is limitation of the number of mistakes in language, otherwise if those are far too many this will lead to gibberish. In painting an artist can make an unlimited number of mistakes and this will not disrupt intelligibility as painting is not liable to a system such as language. In other words, there is no formal definition of mistake in painting while in language there is, and when it is violated to a large degree then it results to nonsense. In painting, even though the characteristics mentioned above can be perceived as mistakes they do not violate any formally stated guidelines or rules²⁶ of painting as they do in language and

²⁶ In the following section there is a brief examination of the notion of rules in painting.

therefore as such they do not readily lead to an incorrect interpretation as they do in language. This points to the idea that it is less important to establish mistakes in painting.

We now proceed to an analogous example of mistake from literature to help strengthen the assumption made in the previous paragraph. Poets can sometimes use language in a ‘wrong’ way, disrupting the rules of grammar or syntax to some degree. Such an example can be Rastafarian poets who have their own modified language called ‘lyaric’ where one discerns many language mistakes and a lot of slang. Yet, this does not constitute a difficulty in their poetry as those ‘wrong’ aspects can be conceived of as part of the poem’s rhythm and meaning and thus not as mistakes in the use of language of the poet’s technique. In language, when a speaker uses language in a wrong way (i.e. grammatically or syntactically) it is possible to be easily incomprehensible. That is to say, a poet can violate some rules of language more flexibly than a speaker in a conversation and still be intelligible and well accepted by the art community, although even in poetry the poet has to follow the rules of language to a large degree. Through the notion of flexibility it is contested that a mistake in language is clearly defined, like for example in “John go to the cinema”, where ‘go’ needs to take ‘es’, while in painting and literature the definition of mistake is not as clearly determined and this as a result leaves room for certain violations.

Moreover, unintelligibility and incoherence to some degree can be acceptable in literature while in language this can cause lapses in communication. For instance, in Samuel Beckett’s play *Waiting for Godot* there are repeatedly incoherent sentences and the use of language is sometimes incongruent and purposeless. By contrast, in conversation, it is difficult to ground a meaningful conversation on such elements and one cannot speak

absurdly in such a way unless she does not wish to be understood and hence successful communication fails. In addition to this, although literature's medium is language, sentences of literature do not count objectivity in the same way as sentences in a conversation. In literature, ordinary language becomes something other than a 'plain' instance of language and there are no explicit restrictions, as is the case with ordinary language, to stick with the literal meaning of the words. It should be emphasized that the reader has more flexibility to conjecture connotations even when those are not part of the word's or sentence's literal meaning. In conversation it is quite unusual to encourage further meanings other than those dictated by the speaker. This links to what is suggested in the previous paragraph with the notion of mistake. A mistake in painting can be easily dismissed or even be unnoticed, by contrast to a linguistic sentence.

Despite the fact that there is more flexibility of the use of language in literature than in conversation, I argue that in the context of painting, rule-boundness becomes even less significant than in the context of other forms of art which are part of a notational system like literature and music. This is grounded on the fact that paintings are free from the restrictions of linguistic meaning. Literary works use language – they are, in essence, a 'notated' form – whereas paintings use a different tool and do not use or constitute any kind of notation. According to Goodman, literature's tool is language and thus it belongs to a notational system since it is constituted by a set of syntactical and semantic rules, that is to say, it is a linguistic system (1976, pp. 207-11). On the other hand, painting is not a notated form because it is formed by pictures and thus is a non-linguistic system (1976, pp. 194-98). We should note here that there is a dictionary which translates or explains words

but there is no established dictionary to translate or explain pictures. Indeed, if there were such a thing then it would most likely prove unsuccessful as it would use one tool to translate another tool; that is to say, in standard linguistic dictionaries words are translated through words, but in the case of a dictionary of pictures, pictures would be translated through words. If this were somehow feasible, then pictures should be translated by pictures, in a system of like-for-like relational correspondence. The transition from one tool to another seems to change the rendition. Whilst there might be books on symbolism which include lists of symbols and signs along with their meaning and various colours with possible psychological meanings, it is impossible to have a directory or lexicon of pictures.²⁷ This is a difficulty that derives from the fact that while it might be easier to recognize the constituents of a sentence or words (letters) and find their meaning in the dictionary, it is difficult to define the constituents of pictures and even more difficult to create a directory of them.

In art as conversation the notion of objectivity of meaning emphasizes the importance of identifying the artist's intentions in the work. This view seems to overlook the fact that painting can involve unrestricted expression, while language is tied up by rules and therefore expression is not as unrestricted as in painting.

²⁷ Perhaps one could say that art related books work somehow like directories where someone finds and compiles information about paintings, alongside criticism and possible descriptions and explanations of the works. One could propose that it would be profitable if art books only included pictures, with the size, medium and perhaps the artist's name next to each painting (to cater for the viewer who is interested in a specific artist's work and wishes to see more paintings by her). The fact that there is usually a great deal of written language accompanying reproductions of paintings, usually in the form of description, means that the interpretation of painting becomes more descriptive. In cases like this, the viewer may therefore *read* a painting rather than *look* at it and *experience* it in a painterly and pictorial fashion. This amounts to the fact that when the viewer reads a painting, the encounter with the work might turn out to be more descriptive and informative than experientially understood through visual terms and sometimes the use of criticism limits or makes the search of more meanings unnecessary.

(ii) Aesthetic experience and function in conversation and painting

The communicative model of interpretation as the view of art as conversation presents it, is marked by some weaknesses when it comes to another important aspect of interpretation. The main doubt of this section is rooted in the suggestion that the process of experiencing or understanding painting can have more dimensions than the communicative. When we look at a painting, we are in a sensate environment and thus a painting might not be a readable object which tries to communicate, explain or justify something, but it may prompt us to feel something through it; this kind of experience induces the aesthetic and involves dimensions such as pleasure and contentment. This claim suggests that painting might not only be communicative, but conversation might be (although this is doubtful). As it has been already mentioned in the previous section, in conversation the speaker determines what she says and the listener expects to understand what she intends to say. Therefore, the speaker's intentions are important to identify in conversation. This points to the difference between painting and conversation which arises from the fact that in conversation words have a conventional, fixed meaning, while representations in painting do not only or always carry meaning and objective meaning itself is not the only (important) aspect of painting. Painting has representational – semantic – meaning but interpretation of it is not only directed at meaning but at other aspects too. In fact, many artists have explicitly claimed that their work does not involve objective meaning but is there to be experienced in aesthetic terms. Specifically, Kandinsky's experience in 1908 of accidentally coming across an abstract picture was this:

“I was returning, immersed in thought, from my sketching, when on opening the studio door, I was suddenly confronted by a picture of indescribable and incandescent loveliness. Bewildered, I stopped staring at it. The painting lacked all subject, depicted no identifiable object and was entirely composed

of bright colour-patches. Finally I approached closer and only then recognized it for what it really was – my own painting, standing on its side on the easel.... One thing became clear to me – that objectiveness, the depiction of objects, needed no place in my paintings, and was indeed harmful to them” (Read 1991, p. 190).

The notion of aesthetic feeling in painting interpretation is developed in the following way. When a speaker is in the course of a conversation, she can experience certain feelings like contentment or satisfaction of having expressed herself or feel pleasure in listening to her interlocutor because she speaks eloquently or feel content of having successfully communicated with other speakers. Besides these feelings, among others, it is uncharacteristic for speakers to have further aesthetic pleasure or feelings in the course of conversation. It seems that it is not typical for conversation to create aesthetic responses in speakers as is the case with viewers in interpreting painting. This contention is founded on the fact that in painting interpretation, pleasure and feelings have a chief role and they are experienced by viewers in special ways, different than the ways experienced in conversation. That is to say, when a speaker is in the process of receiving utterances she is not involved in any kind of sensual atmosphere in that she is not expected to perceive the understanding of utterances through the aesthetic. For instance, when a viewer contemplates the *Raft of the Medusa* she can experience a rich diversity of feelings like awe, beauty, disgust, fear and so on, but when a speaker comes to understand an utterance in conversation, while she can experience those feelings, she does not experience them in an analogous way as in painting. There is something distinctive in experiencing feelings in painting than in utterances of conversation. This results from the fact that paintings reveal in special ways. For example, the *Raft of the Medusa* affords to reveal awe, beauty, disgust and fear; the issue here is that those feelings are not revealed in the same way a speaker reveals them in a conversation. In painting those feelings are felt through ineffability –

they are shown through a quality which differentiates experience of painting from that of conversation. This quality I call *ambiance*. *Ambiance* might be the result of the use of the medium, skill and technique, which is the way by which a painting is revealed. To enhance this view I link Stephen Davies' view of the 'representational character' to what I call the *ambiance* of a painting. Davies claims that:

“Although, in general, the fact that we seek aesthetic satisfaction from representational paintings more readily than from architects' drawings rests on the belief that the most aesthetically rewarding viewing of a painting corresponds to a viewing of that which it represents, an aesthetic interest, in any particular painting is concerned foremost with the representational character of the work rather than with that which it represents” (Davies: 1982 p. 73).

I think Davies is right to claim that we have an aesthetic interest not with what is represented but in the representational character of a work. There is something distinctive about the representational character of painting which reveals the medium, skill and technique in special visual aesthetic ways.

To help support my view in play – which is based on the claim that conversational speech, unlike most cases in art, does not normally require skill in the same way as painting does – we will explore the notion of skill. Conversational powers do require a kind of skill but skill in painting involves a broader range which is associated to the *ambiance* of a work. Skill in the case of painting might be a pursuit to repeatedly practice techniques by the use of medium, to experiment with a variety of materials and an attempt to factually place a picture on a two-dimensional surface. All these actions take place simultaneously so it is difficult to separate skill from medium and technique as they are all interconnected. Something analogous is involved in the production of literature where sentences of novels or verses of a poem are not merely sequences of words which a competent speaker utters

fluently. The words have a literal meaning but in the act of writing the author employs certain techniques or follows a specific artistic style – attempting, for example, to make the verse sound skilfully beautiful (or indeed skilfully ugly) or at least to give it some form that will distinguish it from ordinary speech. She tries, in other words, to make it art. In conversation, when one utters a sentence she does not make attempts to make her utterances sound like art (if she does so, this may result in singing or reciting poetry); she may indeed employ skills and speak conversationally nice, but her intention in most probabilities is to convey her intended meaning. However, in literature, words do not only possess mere meaning but also other properties like sound, rhythm, form, shape and abstraction, which in conversation can be barely noticeable, if they are relevant at all. In addition to this, in literature, a kind of art that is conscientiously related to language and linguistic meaning, the reader or the listener of a poem who understands the language in which the poem is written enjoys other aspects of language, like rhythm, sound, the connection and adjacency of words and letters and so on. Even in case when a reader does not understand a certain language at all, she may read a poem again and again just for the sake of listening to it or of enjoying its properties without really understanding what verses mean. This is the result of the *way* the poet writes which emits a certain ambiance of pleasure to the reader. The properties of a poem are the result of the way it is written – the medium is unbreakably tied with properties and one cannot occur without the other. The notion of ‘way’ is not ineludibly translatable or transferable only through language. Language is only one of the properties of a poem among many others. A similar example seems to be the case of music with lyrics. Sometimes people enjoy listening to foreign language songs without understanding the meaning of the lyrics and therefore the

composer's intentions. Yet, there is a certain ambiance in songs that makes people who do not understand the specific language in which they are performed, intensely enjoy listening to them. We should note that understanding the meaning of language in these instances provides a richer interpretation of both literature and music. What is being emphasized is that even in the case of non-language understanding there are other elements which can serve interpretation while in conversation speakers are necessarily tied up to the meanings of language and have no other ways to experience it other than to identify the speaker's objective meaning.

In addition to this, individual skills in painting can offer different meanings, despite the fact that there are paintings with similar objective representations. Artists have different kinds of skill and thus their work emits different ambiance. For example, Gericault, Van Gogh and Basquiat painted skulls.²⁸ It is obvious that all three of them use different kinds of skill. If we compare some of their paintings we may reach the conclusion that in some cases their paintings have similar representational aspects, something that can lead to similar semantic meanings and intentions, but the forceful difference in technique and skill makes the viewer experience them on very different aesthetic levels. The aesthetic experience of Basquiat's painting can make the viewer experience forms in a more primitive and basic way, by contrast to Gericault's skill which may induce feelings of exactness and elaboration through its form and dissimilarly with Van Gogh's skill which offers the viewers a kind of index of the artist's movements because of visible and heavy brush strokes. In addition to this, in the realm of painting still life has been very much

²⁸ Table of Pictures, *Figure 6, 7 and 8.*

depicted and practiced and a lot of it has very similar semantic meanings and intentions, yet it is the ambiance of each individual artist's skill and the use of the medium which makes those paintings emit a different aesthetic experience. If we suppose that our goal for interpretation is objective meaning resulting from the artist's intentions then we would have the same objective meaning for very many still life paintings. Despite that, looking at different still life paintings which depict very similar objects and settings (and which therefore have similar objective meanings) that yet they are so differently depicted. This suggests that the viewer is offered the chance to experience painting in more ways than only the communicative; she can reach an aesthetic understanding of the painting by means of the rich variety of skills, media and techniques used by painters. A question that arises here is: 'what would be the value of still life if we only consider it in the realm of the communicative?' A still life which represents two apples, a jar, a hat and a table, does not seem to give a meaningful understanding as the *Raft of the Medusa* probably gives. It just represents these objects and in itself it is hard to convey a meaningful understanding. It is for this reason that aesthetic experience, which results from the ambiance of the work, is given emphasis in this context.

At this point it must be highlighted that ambiance might also be the result of the medium and representation being one. A painting is inextricably the same thing as its representation; the medium reveals the representation (and therefore the possible content-meaning) and representation reveals the medium and one cannot exist without the other on the surface of a painting. This is the case in painting by contrast to language, which is based on an arbitrariness model between a word (symbol) and its meaning. On this model, a word could mean something other than what it means and to be uttered differently; a

painting is not based on such a model where a symbol (a representation or elements of representation) is related to a meaning which could be otherwise. This relates to the concept of specificity in painting. A painting, for instance, shows a specific table, while in language the word table can be any table, there is not any specific table represented and moreover the symbols of the word table are not connected meaningfully to what it signifies. In painting, the medium is inseparable from representation-content and thus a painting cannot be otherwise. This assumption leads to a reason for thinking that since painting does not function in virtue of a symbolic system like language it has more dimensions than the communicative ones. There are times when the reception of painting concerns the experience of it in some certain ways, which does not essentially aim at interpreting it objectively and meaningfully in the sense of communication (like in still life). It is true that some kinds of art provide greater inducement to meaningfully interpret than others - like representational painting (religious, renaissance, realism, impressionism). But genres like abstract painting (suprematism²⁹, minimal painting, abstract expressionism) do not induce us so much to interpret them in a meaningful way. A model of interpretation based on the aesthetic has been more forcefully adopted with the emergence of abstract and conceptual painting, which does not represent in the way figurative or realistic painting

²⁹ Kasimir Malevich was the founder of suprematism and by contrast to the automatism and spontaneity of surrealism he had a logical mind and was cautious and precise when he was painting. He contended that the reality in art was the sensational effect of colour itself. In a painting he exhibited in 1915, an image of a black square on a white background (Table of Pictures, *Figure 9*) he held that the basis of all art was the feeling this contrast induced. "For the suprematist, therefore, the proper means is the one that provides the fullest expression of pure feeling and ignores the habitually accepted object. The object in itself is meaningless to him; and the ideas of the conscious mind are worthless. Feeling is the decisive factor... and thus art arrives at non-objective representation – at suprematism" (Read 2000, p. 204).

does. Although in all painting medium and representation are one, in abstract and conceptual painting this is more obvious.

As a way of example, Arthur Danto suggests that in contemporary art some artists, like Jasper Johns, managed to collapse the distance between vehicle and content, rendering thus the properties of the thing shown coincident with the properties of the vehicle. This as a result, abolished the semantic space between reality and art (Danto 1974, p. 148). This implies that this kind of art is unconstrained by the separation of content and medium as the two become one, and thus the semantic parameters of the work do not lie in the content (as representation of something meaningful) but in the medium itself. This kind of art is created in such a way as to make viewers interpret the work in an experiential way. It involves a pure experience and experience in these terms is not perceived as meaning in the 'traditional' way. Kandinsky for instance, desired to paint what can be meaningful beyond appearances and claimed that colours have physical effects and encourage moods and feelings. In his own words, the painting is:

“A construction of concrete elements of form and colour which become expressive in the process of synthesis or arrangement: the form of the work of art is in itself the content, and whatever expressiveness there is in the work of art originates with the form” (Read 1991, p. 194-195).

He expounds a notion of form that is the same thing as the content and this in itself is in a sense the subject of painting. The same applies for Pollock for whom it has been reported that at the end of 1943 he was concentrated on painting Peggy Guggenheim's mural and one of his main problems before delivering his work was to discover what his true subject was. After months of being indecisive about the mural's subject he decided that his 'mode

of creation constitute his theme'. That is to say, the process of painting itself was the subject of his work (Landau 1989, p. 26).

My suggestion at this point is that the assemblage of medium and representation might be more noticeable and understandable in abstract painting, but at the same time realistic and figurative painting is in a sense also abstract and thus in all genres medium and representation are one. To better explain this claim, when an artist paints realistically she does not strictly paint reality (world) exactly as it is. By taking some examples throughout many periods of the history of painting, we see that realistic paintings are painted in an abstract way in a sense. For instance, religious, renaissance, baroque, romanticist and impressionist painting is figurative but it is not actually realistic; the way it is depicted has reference to the readily visible reality but it is not strictly realistic. While painting realistically or abstractly artists employ similar elements and skills. The way objects (reality) are depicted both in realistic painting is utterly painterly with a great variety of skills and techniques. One can say that in realism³⁰ reality is depicted as it is, although there again it is difficult to austere hold that. Lastly, when we have a careful look at reality we see that objects do not have a fixed shape or colour, where they actually begin or end, or when we look at objects from close up or from a long distance they become visually abstract.

In this section the notion of aesthetic experience stresses that in interpretation viewers are involved in more roles than only the communicative ones. This places objectivity of meaning on a secondary level in favor of the aesthetic experience.

³⁰ Some of the most popular realists are Courbet, Millet, Corot and Homer.

(iii) The notions of non-systematicity and creativity in interpretation

So far, it has been advocated that there can be other possibilities for interpretation that are separate from objective and communicative meaningfulness and that viewers are involved in a kind of aesthetic experience. This will be further supported by the notion of creativity on the part of the viewer. It appears that the scheme put forward by the view of art as conversation in respect of interpretation refers to a correspondence system. Namely, it considers that interpretive claims about paintings are true depending on whether they stand in an appropriate and compatible relation to the artist's intentions and that in fact interpretation is confined by artistic intentions. Specifically, Carroll while referring to artworks claims that "Our best hypotheses about their actual intentions should constrain our interpretations of artworks. That is, how we place the artist and her purposes is relevant to artistic interpretations" (1997 p. 308). Following his line, in order for an interpretation to be correct it has to comply with the artist's intention – it is judged as true based on this premise – and hence it needs supportive reasons in order to be substantial. Essentially, Carroll here sounds to fall under EAI as through his statement he says that interpretations are constrained by intentions, implying in that way that they are limited (to intentions). This reminds a similar view formulated by Hirsch according to which one should seek to identify the author's intentions in order to form a sound and objective interpretation, which leads in his opinion to the best interpretation. He claims that "Validity of interpretation is not the same as inventiveness of interpretation. Validity implies the correspondence of an interpretation to a meaning which is represented by the text" (1992, p. 396). Hirsch seems to overtly adopt the view of art as conversation as he equates the method of gaining understanding about a work with language understanding and seems to have been strongly

influenced by the correspondence theory of language which holds that true statements correspond with reality and false statements fail to do so and sentences correspond with states of affair in the world. That is to say, if the meaning of a sentence corresponds to a state of affairs in the world (i.e. the cat is on the table) then the sentence is true; if it does not correspond then it is false. Therefore, along these lines sentences in language are essentially true or false. Maybe this definition of truth applies to representational systems like language (although philosophers contend that there are problems in accepting this). Nevertheless, in painting it is difficult to say that the viewer's interpretation has to correspond with the artist's intentions, as is the case in conversation where speakers need to identify each other's intentions in order to conduct a meaningful conversation. In this way the actual intentionalist places the viewer in a kind of conditioning and disregards the fact that painting does not entail the same kind of understanding as language does and thus supports a systematized interpretation. Interpretation *per se* cannot be systematized; such systematization entails finite and predetermined interpretation and experience of painting, something that can lead to the recycling and sterility of interpretations. Art as conversation theory can be applied in painting interpretation as a complementary in order to structure and organize concepts, like to orientate the work in history, give the viewer information about its maker, her life and aspirations, but it should not be authoritatively used as the primary and fundamental instrument for the reason that it can impede a creative and imaginative interpretive process.

The above claim essentially assumes that the very act of searching for the possibility of different meanings within a painting – without being confined by the system which prescribes that viewers have to be aware of the artist's intentions because the artist wishes

to communicate like in conversation – can be an enormously rewarding experience for the viewer, even in the case when she has no evidence to justify whether her interpretation is true or compatible with artistic intentions. For this act makes the viewer ‘stretch’ the mind and in itself promotes ingenuity and resourcefulness. Through this approach, it is as though painting interpretation works as a means of training and stimulating one’s mind. At this point it is interesting to mention Bohm’s and Peat’s suggestion that “the creative person does not strictly know what he or she is looking for” as new thoughts typically arise from creative ‘play of the mind’. When the creative play is in action innovative perceptions result which make people propose new ideas, prompting exploration (1989, pp. 48-50).

This remark also engenders resonances to Rene Magritte who wrote in one of his letters:

“I conceive of the art of painting as the science of juxtaposing colours in such a way that their actual appearance disappears and lets a poetic image emerge... There are no ‘subjects’, no ‘themes’ in my painting. It is a matter of imagining images whose poetry restores to what is known that which is absolutely unknown and unknowable” (Alexandrian 1995, p.7).

His statement seems to assert that since the actual appearance of colours disappears and this lets a poetic image emerge that the image itself is not objective, it has no theme, and thus imagination transpires and gives way to what is unknown and unknowable. The sense of imagination, uncertainty and aporia as well as liberation from logical conclusiveness are resourceful and bring about constructive thoughts about how the world is to be perceived through the revelations of painting. It is vital for the viewer to be encouraged to come up with fresh and unknown perceptions through experiencing painting. As mentioned before, painting – and all art in general – is different than other situations like language, therefore, venturing to experience it outside systematic limitations enhances the search of what might come after the discovery of one boundary (interpretation) and then after another and so on.

In conversation, it is not typical for a speaker to relate an utterance to her inner perceptions and experiences creatively and she is not encouraged to receive it in a new way she wishes to explore.

Language understanding and understanding gained through painting entail two different approaches to understanding the world: in painting, understanding can be relative to the viewer (as discussed in the previous chapter) but in language, understanding tends to be more objective as it is confined within a certain rule-bound system. Notably, viewers do not need to realize the same thing, as is the case in language, where all the speakers who obtain understanding about what a certain sentence means have to grasp it in the same way. What should be emphasized here is that viewers may have distinctive inclinations when experiencing painting. The outcome of an endeavour to find out something through the experience of painting can involve a different adventure for each viewer. This does not imply that interpretation is a matter of mere whim; in the realm of pleasure and emotional understanding, we do not get it from the painting just because we want it or need it – we find it there if the painting merits that response in a sense. It suggests that it is valuable for the viewer to create narratives and suppositions in her mind about what she sees in a painting. Conversely, art as conversation theory hinders expansion of creativity and excitement of imagination; the notion of ‘stretch’ mentioned above can be experienced by going beyond the limitations of the MA intentionalist system which embraces objective interpretation. Even in cases when one is not aware of any intentions or criticism about a work one can still interpret it since one of the inexplicable properties of painting is that it reveals itself to the viewer without any external assistance.

The reason for not wishing to utterly adopt art as conversation is because such a conversational system-approach is too perfunctory and rigid for painting interpretation. The interpretation a viewer experiences does not require to be validated by what the best evidence indicates or with what is logically conclusive from the artist's intentions, as is the case of speakers' intentions in conversation. I do not mean that such a deductive method is not at all useful as, among others, it may promote justification of one's thoughts. Nevertheless, it does not constitute the most appropriate model for painting interpretation because it can lead the viewer to a closed conclusion. It is true that mere belief about a painting does not qualify as evidence, but the idea highlighted here is that 'to qualify for evidence' does not constitute a necessary condition for interpretation. The primary goal is to prompt originality and inventiveness, so various means and methods used to reach these goals are acceptable, even if they do not qualify as evidence.

Through the following point which concerns the artist-viewer and speaker-interlocutor relation I wish to stress that the examination of these relations will help understand that a viewer's interpretation process is similar to the artist's creative process and a speaker's understanding process in a conversation is similar to the interlocutor's utterance process. To demonstrate the point, there is a very brief repetition of some of what is said in chapter 3 about what an artist does when she paints. An artist usually begins with a general idea, or conception and she may start off with preliminary sketches. When she sets out to paint on the canvas a new challenge takes place: she can stick to her previous conception or not, and usually through the very act of painting she allows her work to develop into something she has not previously thought of or intended. Even in the case of her faithfully following her initial plan she does not feel any imperatives to do so; she is doing so because she

herself decides to. In other words, she does not have a conception which she applies by means of techniques and materials in a canonical or systematized way, rather her techniques and materials develop out of her conceptions in an individual way which is flexible and liable to change as she creates. Techniques do exist independently of what one conceives oneself as doing, though they get taken in certain directions when used by artists in practice. Artist's methods and processes are not confined within a rule-bound system like language where a speaker must speak in accordance with the rules that govern language; that is, what an artist produces is not subject to such inflexible rules. Of course, in painting there are some rules artists learn in art schools, through books, by practice and so on; such rules include for instance the fact that an artist should only mix two or three colours together at a time otherwise the result will be muddy or that to make something recede in the distance an artist should use a cool colour. These rules, among many others, do not always work like that and they can be effortlessly disregarded when an artist either consciously or unconsciously decides to do so. The emphasis here is that while painting, the artist, unlike the speaker, finds herself outside the rigidity of system. Analogously, while interpreting, the viewer reacts in a similar way to the artist, that is, she interprets painting in accordance to no system. She also, like the artist, has the aptitude to be non-systematic since she is not interpreting within certain canonical confines. The artist-viewer relation is less systematized than the speaker-interlocutor relation. The first one is based on creativity, on generativity of meaning, on going beyond what is readily seen or what is logically thinkable; while the second is based on creativity and generativity to some degree it is also founded on (some) inflexible rules which place speakers within certain linguistic frames.

As it has just been argued, knowledge of artistic intentions being the standard of correctness, in the way it is articulated by art as conversational, might be too restrictive to fit within the realm of painting interpretation. Interpretation in the context of such a system entails a kind of telos. That is to say, beyond what the artist intends and what is discovered through her interviews and diaries, everything else can be irrelevant; this as a method itself seems to be teleological and therefore takes interpretation up to a certain end. This hints towards a monolithic process of interpretation. The contention of this section suggests that non-systematicity in painting interpretation takes place when thoughts and actions lack a sense of telos and thus the viewer has the advantage for inventiveness and originality. As it has been pointed out in the previous chapter, it is possible for a viewer to invent more than what the artist intends. The very process of repudiating telos and pursuing creativity makes it worth looking at a painting even in the case where the viewer may not rightly identify the artist's intentions.

I further assume that establishing painting interpretation on the view of art as conversation may concern a psychological matter. That is, sometimes there is a certain degree of concern on the part of the viewer to confidently search for interpretations that are not part of what the artist has intended. There is unease or uncertainty as regards the grounding of a viewer's interpretation according to her creative beliefs and conceptions because this cannot be systematically validated or justified. In addition to this, the viewer may also feel that because a work is an artist's creation that she should interpret it according to artistic intentions out of respect for the artist. It is true that in the context of art as conversation there is no special place for non-systematicity since our creative beliefs and conceptions have to be validated by something external to ourselves, something that secures us that our

beliefs are true based on the fact that they can be justified on certain premises. There is an instinctive fretfulness in painting about what is it really – a kind of wonder around its presence. The question that arises here is why should there be a standard of correctness if painting itself does not function like a linguistic system and since it can neither be substantiated as correct nor incorrect?

This can be approached as follows. One of the beautiful mysteries of painting is that its indefinableness lies in its not being established on any logical system or if it is, this system does not work like a formal linguistic system. If it did, it would follow that the meanings of painting are gained in virtue of the symbolic representation of the world, like it is the case in language. This is associated with the idea that painting is mystical and mysterious, both for the artist and the viewer, and therefore any justification or validity of it would be redundant. Painting emits a special kind of ambiance, one where words and explanation are not necessary prerequisites as it encapsulates an awesome silence. It seems intuitive to me to assume that mystery resists a system and since painting is a kind of mystery it also resists one. Mystery might not be liable to or explained though language since it goes beyond systematic understanding. This directs to the hypothesis that there is a certain degree of risk in mystery because there is no linguistic explanation of it and perhaps this is one of the reasons that art as conversation avoids embracing it with regard to painting interpretation.

Conclusion

The above discussion suggests that the view of art as conversation does not provide an adequate account of painting interpretation as it assumes it functions like linguistic interpretation. Art as conversation strongly relies on objective meaning and as a result it leaves behind crucial aspects like aesthetic experience and creativity on the part of the viewer. Understanding in conversation is based on a community which shares the same language rules, while painting interpretation does not require such sharable rules followed by a certain community in order to be understood. Painting interpretation can function more individually, by contrast to language where noncompliance to the rules of syntax or grammar can lead to communicative chaos. In conversation, speakers have to follow the rules of a shared language and rules constitute the standard of correctness of such a formal system. Conversely, in painting rules can be privately followed as well as ignored.

Epilogue

This project has investigated the notion of intention in making and interpreting painting. The examination of intention assists in our understanding of the value of artistic intentions in painting interpretation. The current research was not specifically undertaken to criticize Anscombe's account of intention but to use it alongside MAI view in order to provide a different insight as to how intention might work in the production of painting. I do not reject MAI, but I suggest some weaknesses which can assist create a new model of interpretation.

Throughout it has been argued that artists do not only have intentions when they paint, but they also undergo other states and engage in actions which are not always intentional. Indeed, artists have intentions; nonetheless, their intentions are often penetrated by reasons for acting which are not as clear as those of everyday actions. Inspiration, desire and intention to experiment are different in nature because they cannot be as clearly justified as everyday actions and as such they do not establish a meaningful reason that gives information or explanation of the artist's action as instances of everyday actions might do. These states involve a more complex account of intention than that provided for everyday actions. Artistic intentions, states and actions are inclined to a sense of exploration where the end-result is unknown and the process of making is variable and very important. The assertion that artistic intentions encompass states and actions that cannot be explained even by artists, points to the view that knowledge of them on the part of the viewer might not be valuable in that they do not provide an instructive ground for meaningful interpretation.

It has also been discussed that to *understand* what the artist intends to understand might not be as easy for the viewer as it is to *know* what she intends to understand. It is considerably different to read and be aware of what the artist intends and to experience and understand what she intends. The inaccessibility of the use of the medium on the part of the viewer entails that the artist's experience of understanding her intentions is different than that of the viewer. This lies in the fact that when painting the artist masters, practices, experiments with materials and techniques and experiences the medium in a dissimilar way to the viewer when she looks at the work. This kind of understanding painting on the part of the artist cannot be exactly passed on to the viewer.

The issue of artist's pleasure is also intriguing as it is hard to see how the intention to feel pleasure can plausibly be counted as part of the meaning of painting since it is not apparent. The absence of the pleasure of process which counts as meaning and intention for the artist, may not count so for the viewer as she has no means of discerning this through the representation of the work. It means that sometimes intentions – which cover a broad range of states as suggested throughout – are difficult for the viewer to access only through the representation of the painting. In retrospect, it appears that MAI reduces art making to a practice of transferring intentions and interpretation in this perspective eventually determines the 'success' of an artist in the narrow terms of the execution of her intentions.

On a closing note, it is ambitious to assert the artist's intentions from the representation of a painting since the empirical process weakens the objectivity of such an evaluation. An

objective process would demand its verification; however, in the case we discuss, this is impossible. In a sense, things would be more convenient if we had an *a priori* theory of interpretation which would not have to do with an empirical process and which would therefore assure absolute objectivity. In the case of painting, one cannot seclude the empirical aspect and wholly talk about it in *a priori* terms. Such an *a priori* theory would be connected with *a priori* knowledge in which the human aspect would not have access.

Table of Pictures:*Figure 1*

Théodore Géricault

1818-19

The Raft of the Medusa

Oil on canvas, 4.9 x 7.16m

Musée du Louvre, Paris

Figure 2



Rembrandt van Rijn

1627

The Rich Man from the Parable

Oil on canvas, 31.9 x 42.5cm

Staatliche Museen Preussischer, Berlin

Figure 3



Lucian Freud

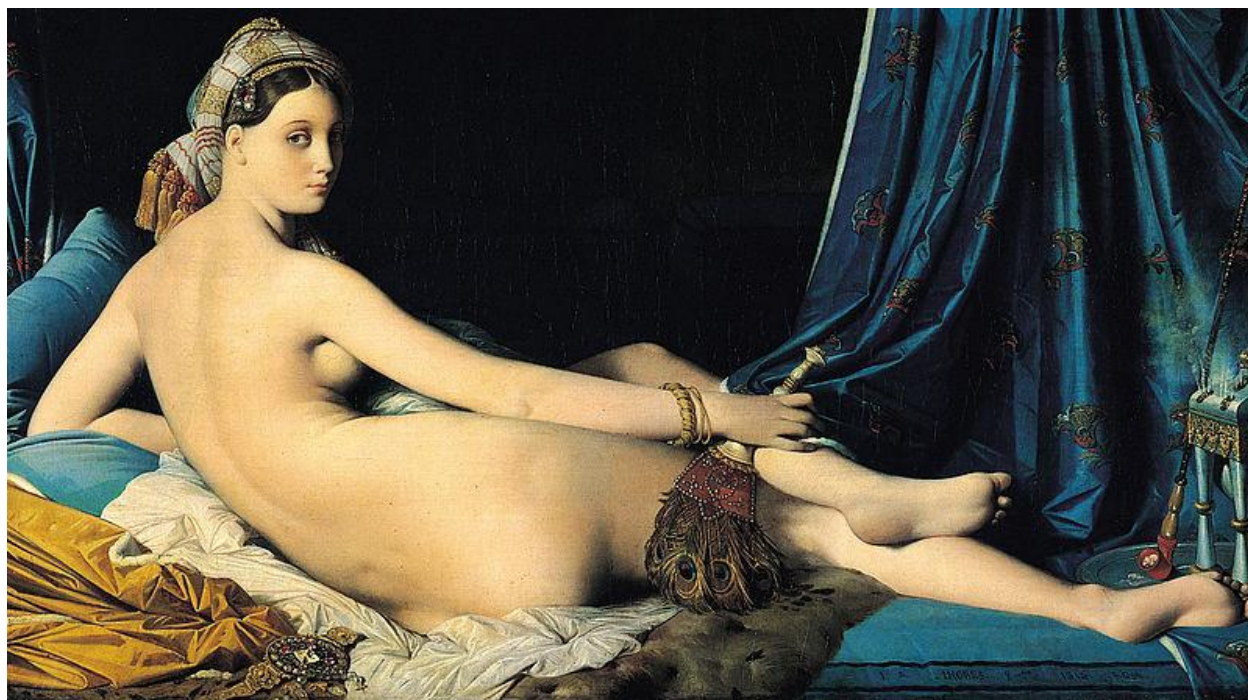
1984-88

Two Irishmen

Oil on Canvas, 68 X 55.75 inch

Private Collection

Figure 4



Dominique Ingres

1814

Odalisque

Oil on Canvas, 35cm X 64cm

Musée du Louvre, Paris

Figure 5



Henri Matisse

1911

The Red Studio

Oil on Canvas, 181cm X 219cm

The Museum of Modern Art, New York

Figure 6



Théodore Géricault

1812-14

Three skulls

Oil on Canvas, 31,5cm X 60cm

Musée Girodet, Montargis

Figure 7



Vincent Van Gogh

1887-88

Skull

Oil on Canvas, 41cm X 31cm

Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam

Figure 8



Jean-Michel Basquiat

1984

Untitled, Skull

Acrylic & Mixed Media on Canvas

The Estate of Jean-Michel Basquiat

Figure 9



Kasimir Malevich

1915

Black Square

Oil on Canvas, 106.2 X 106.5cm

State Russian Museum, St Petersburg

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