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On the Philosophical Preconditions for Visual Arguments

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Visual Objects as Part of a Rational Communication Process

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ABSTRACT: In order for visual objects to be fully integrated in argumentation studies, we should be able to show how some visual objects can be part of a rational communication process and be analyzed as part of rational activity, where audiences reason their way to intentions and beliefs via their recognition of the arguer's intention to produce such results. This paper will focus on the way to enable the embedment of some visual objects in argumentation theory.

KEYWORDS: cooperative communication, Cooperative Principle, implicature, intention, meaning, Paul Grice, pragmatics, rationality.

1. THE NOTION OF "IMPLICATURES" – WHAT MAGRITTE'S "THIS IS NOT A PIPE" IMPLIES BUT DOES NOT EXPLICITLY UTTER

Understanding visual objects is not fundamentally different in kind from linguistic understanding, however it requires different sorts of treatment. The central hypothesis of this paper is that significance of certain visual objects can be explained by principles that explain important features of linguistic meaning. However, there is a crucial difference between language and visual objects, since in most cases visual objects do not convey their meaning directly in the same way written texts, for instance, do. On the contrary, the viewer's task is basically to decode the indirect and implied meaning, since there is sparse direct information to go along with. This is where Paul Grice's general approach to the pragmatic features of language comes in useful, since it gives plausible and detailed accounts of indirect uses of language over a very wide range of cases. His approach does not limit itself to natural language, but is applicable virtually to any cooperative activity of symbolic systems. Furthermore, one basic characteristic of Grice's philosophy of language and of visual objects alike is the creator's intentions.

Thus, this paper focuses on the concept of intention, which according to the philosophy of Grice, constitutes our understanding of communication and thought. Because an intention implies expectation, there are limits to the intentions that a creator of a visual object might reasonably form. When the intention is specifically communicative, the creator has to take account of his viewers' likely expectations. In other words: what the viewers assume about the creator - that the creator is undertaking a cooperative attempt to communicate – will affect the communicative intention(s) the creator forms and what he utters in the effort to make that intention manifest. Thus, communication is shaped or constrained by the viewers' interest in the intention of the creator. Furthermore, it will be considered *irrational* on behalf of a creator of a visual

object if he will try to implicate something even though he has every reason to suppose that the viewers will not be able to figure out his intentions. This is the point where the expressive and communicative characteristics turn out to be crucial, since the implicated meaning (implicatures in Grice's terms) cannot be generated in the absence of these constraints. The question is, therefore, how a viewer will be able to figure out the creator's intentions via his utterance.

Communication and meaning should be understood as separate concepts, that although necessarily interact they are still not univocal. The distinction is between what a creator means but does not explicitly utter, and what creators using a visual sign with its conventional meaning would commonly use it to implicate. This is where Grice's distinction between what is said and what is implicated becomes helpful for the project of visual arguments. He maintains that this distinction is not necessarily exhaustive as to what extent one can distinguish precisely between 'what is said' and what was not. Thus, the creator's specific intentions are something that should be added to the cooperative supposition, since what a creator means or implies is determined by what he intends and this issue is naturally pertaining to the nature of propositional attitudes. Creator's implicatures are identified by viewers only because viewers recognize others' intentions.

The advantage of the Paul Grice's theory of language is that it describes the general character of any symbolic communication based on the idea that communication is a kind of coordination game in which the cooperative supposition plays an essential role. (Kent, 1994: 155). In a series of influential and controversial papers, Grice has argued for a pragmatical approach rather than the formalist approach in semantic theory.[1] Furthermore, Grice was primarily focusing on language meaning and use, but he himself notes that his theory, under suitable generalizations may apply to any cooperative venture, linguistic or not (cf. Grice, 1988:28).

The phenomenon in need of theoretical specification, and on which this paper will focus, is the one in which creators of visual objects mean things which they do not actually convey explicitly in any way, and nonetheless viewers are able to recover information that is not itself given by the literal or visible meanings of the object's elements. This phenomenon in the philosophy of language is commonly analyzed by using Paul Grice's framework for understanding what he termed "implicature," which refers to what a speaker does not say but rather communicates, suggests, implies, etc., in virtue of saying what he does. A case that illustrates this phenomenon and is discussed at length because of this, is Rene Magritte's *The Treachery of Images*, 1928-29 (known also as "this is not a pipe"). It is a case where the signs and the painting as a whole go contrary to our conventional habits regarding almost everything that is connected with seeing and understanding. Magritte's painting is not only thought provoking but difficult to process. The words call attention to the fact that we ordinarily see the depicted object as we do the object itself, while implicitly instructing us to ignore that tendency and notice the non-pipe-like qualities of the picture. Our conventional object recognition and semantics collide with the instruction to disengage from them. Thus, a feeling of tension or effort is

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[1] See Grice 1957, 1968, 1975a,b, 1978. These papers represent a series of lectures given by Grice in the academic year of 1967-8. For a condensed reprinting of these papers, see Grice 1988. For an overview of Grice's philosophy of language, see Grandy 1989. For a survey of the philosophy of language and mind see Burge 1992.

created that plays a role in the provocation of thought. To ease this tension, we try to reconstruct a hypothesis regarding what this painting means by implication.

2. THE COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLE – COMMUNICATION IS A COOPERATIVE ENTERPRISE

Grice was more concerned with what makes expressions meaningful than with the structure of a language. He attempted to analyze linguistic meaning in terms of a special sort of communicative intention. He claimed that linguistic meaning is to be understood in terms of what a person means by an utterance. And this latter sort of meaning is to be understood in terms of the person's intending the utterance to produce some effect in an audience by means of the recognition of this intention. The linguistic meaning of the utterance is roughly the content of the intention (Grice, 1968, 1969).

A Gricean theory of meaning applied to visual objects will characterize the meaning of a visual object in terms of its creator's intentions to produce various propositional attitudes among the viewers of the object. Rephrasing Gricean analysis of meaning to the visual realm will go as follows: The meaning of a visual object (as a type of a non-natural sign) in general is a derivative function of what a creator of this object means by that object in individual instances of uttering it. That is, the universal "type" meaning, or set of such meanings, for a given visual object is an abstraction from the "token" meaning that a creator means for the object in specific instances of use. However, in cases of exceptional visual objects, there is only "token" meaning, since "type" meaning is most likely to be applicable to a mass usage of visual objects.

This account opposes any formalist account, according to which the universal conventional meaning of a visual object predetermines what that objects might mean in any given instance of use. A formalist approach will discourage inquiry into what a particular creator might mean by a visual object in a particular circumstances of its creation – in a particular utterance. A formalist approach will hold that it is possible to understand the utterance from knowing what the object "means" without qualification or additional information. However, a Gricean approach will hold that what a visual object "means" derives from what the creator means by uttering it. Grice holds that "what a particular speaker or writer means by a sign on a particular occasion… may well diverge from the standard meaning of the sign" (Grice 1957: 381). In other words, Grice pointed out that it is not always easy to distinguish between the linguistic meaning of an utterance and various contextual suggestions that might be associated with the meaning of the utterance – what Grice called "conversational implicatures" (Grice, 1988: Part 1). Such an approach can account for Magritte's painting, where the signs and the painting as a whole are different from the standard meaning of these signs.

Grice's theory begins with the observation that conversations are not random, unrelated remarks, but serve purposes. If they are to continue, then they must involve some degree of cooperation and some convergence of purposes. Parties to a communicative exchange are presumed to be engaged in a cooperative enterprise such that, with all else being equal, their conversational contributions can be expected to be truthful, relevant, informative, and so on. Otherwise, at least one of the parties would have no reason to continue the conversation, and we are presuming that the participants are rational agents. Above all, the parties can be expected to observe the "Cooperative

Principle" and its various maxims. When taking an utterance at face value would have the parties violating this presumption, the viewers use this result, together with whatever other relevant information they have available to them, to figure out what that utterance was meant to convey on the occasion in question, beyond whatever the presented object itself literally or otherwise expresses. The cooperative principle functions as a supposition to the whole communicative exchange in the following sense: The viewers exploit the cooperative supposition, that supposition is ascertained, and the creator's communicative intention is fulfilled. The Cooperative Principle is as follows (Grice, 1988: 26):

> We might then formulate a rough general principle which participants will be expected (ceteris paribus) to observe, namely: Make your conversational contribution such as is required at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged. One might label this the Cooperative Principle.

Under the general umbrella of the Cooperative Principle, Grice distinguishes more specific maxims and submaxims, which will be discussed shortly. However, it is important to note that Grice views these principles, under suitable generalizations, as applying in any cooperative venture, linguistic or not. He gives some illustrations of this idea, though he does not attempt to formulate the more general principles (cf. Grice, 1988:28). The emergent idea is that the symbolic language of visual objects is as any other symbolic language a cooperative and social enterprise.

A Gricean approach to Magritte's "this is not a pipe" would deny that it is simply by virtue of the semantic implication of this painting that exhibiting "The Treachery of Images" implies the acknowledgement of its meaning. At first glance, the instinctive opinion is that it *is* a pipe and that something went wrong with the painting. This impression is the outcome of the standard way people think and perceive their own relationship with pictures, words, and the world. It is because the familiar and conventional way people perceive the world that they see the painting as "wrong," and hence why the painting is so confusing to them. Thus, the semantic implications of this painting are insufficient for the understanding of Magritte's intentions. Rather, the full implication arises from more general feature or principle of the use of the symbolic language. First and foremost it is the Cooperative Principle. It is the viewer's tacit knowledge of such a principle governing the creator's use of symbolic system, rather than of any peculiar semantic features of the painting, that enables him to infer, on seeing the painting, that the creator means to acknowledge by implication his intention.

The painting shows a pipe that looks as an indefinite and regular pipe. Magritte painted below the pipe: *"Ceci n'est pas une pipe" (This is not a pipe)*, which seems a contradiction but he intends it to be true: The painting is not a pipe. It is an image of a pipe. As Magritte himself commented: "Just try to stuff it with tobacco! If I were to have had written on my picture 'This is a pipe' I would have been lying" (Foucault, 1973: 56). Even if there was a pipe attached to the canvas, the statement could still be true, depending on what the words "is" and "pipe" convey or denote. The usual interpretation of this painting is that the effect of the painting should make the viewers re-evaluate their casual interpretation of their environment. Certainly, it disturbs the habitual trust we place in names and their ability to describe a thing, person or concept. Whatever is the full interpretation of this enigmatic painting, its meaning lays in the play between its

explicit meaning and implied significance. The painting obliges the viewer to abandon the simplistic significance of the painting and to try to understand its deeper significance. For instance, the exact representation of the pipe is both a representation of a "real" pipe and a representation of a pipe in ourselves, as we see a pipe in general. The borders between reality, images of reality, mental representation, symbolic representation and their linguistic and visual description become blurred. But how viewers come to generate such understanding of this painting?

It is the viewer's tacit knowledge of the general pragmatic principles discouraging simplistic statements, rather than of any special semantic or pragmatic features of the painting that enables him to infer, on seeing the painting, that the creator means to imply the more subtle meaning. For, if the creator had wanted to imply a superficial or trivial meaning, he "ought" to have eluded which, according to the proposed quasi-ethical nature of the Cooperative Principe of symbolic use. By leaving open the painting's interpretation, the creator implies that he aims at a deeper meaning.

What turns some visual objects to intriguing objects of meaning is that such general pragmatic implication is "cancellable": that is, the creator can go on to suggest indirectly something that cancels the apparent implication. Such a maneuver is impossible with semantic implication. Magritte's "this is not a pipe" is a typical example. This painting utters that although there is a painted pipe, it is still not a "pipe". This semantic implication is not cancellable. A creator cannot exhibit such a drawing and imply in some way that a painted pipe is a real pipe. However, the general pragmatic implication of these drawings *is* cancellable. Magritte's own philosophy is questionable, although, from Michel Foucault's discussion of the painting and its paradox in his 1973 book, *This is not a Pipe*, one can learn at least about the richness of the philosophy behind it.[2]

3. THE COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLE AND ITS SUBORDINATE MAXIMS – THE EXPLANATION OF HOW IMPLICATED MEANING EMERGES

Analyzing the pragmatics of communication in this way led Grice to develop a more general theory of pragmatic implication, in his "Logic and Conversation" 1967. One of his main contributions was that participants in communication understand the Cooperative Principle. This superordinate principle comprises several subordinate "maxims" (Grice, 1975a, 1975b).[3] These maxims are imperatives that have to be

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[2] Foucault criticizes received notions of representation in art and argues that within Modernity, people are falsely positioned within an established system of seeing that links reality with visual representation. Magritte's painting of a pipe, combined with the painted words "This is not a pipe," calls into question visual representation itself, inasmuch as what is painted on canvas is not actually a pipe, but a depiction of a pipe. The legend, which is wholly part of the artwork and not in its customary marginal frame, serves to point up the artifice of the conventional equivalency between "a pipe" and the image of a pipe. Important to Foucault's analysis is the distinction between resemblance and similitude in visual representation. In saying that an image resembles reality, one assumes the ontological superiority of the latter. With similitude, however, the objective "referent" is gone; things and images are "more or less like one another without any of them being able to claim the privileged status of model for the rest" (Foucault, 1973: 10).

[3] The four most important subordinate rules or "maxims" are:

I. *Maxims of Quantity*: 1. Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange). 2. Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

observed and are an important part of a viewers' competence in understanding the visual world. In other words, the interpretation of visual objects and understanding its meaning is a linguistic process that has to be mastered by the viewers like the mastering of any other language.

In order to see the importance of the Cooperative Principle, the maxims and their background, we should ask what conclusion a competent viewer would draw when faced with a creator's violation of a maxim. There are several possible conclusions, depending on the particular case. The simplest case is where a creator means to observe the Cooperative Principle, but fails to fulfill it through ineptitude. For example, he may ineptly use highly complicated symbols or icons that are webbed in too sophisticated a composition, that would be hard to understand for his intended viewers and occasion. In doing so, he is inadvertently violating, for instance, the maxim of Manner. Many other failures to fulfill the Cooperative Principle through ineptitude are possible, but are irrelevant for the present purpose. What is more important are those cases where the seemingly failure has a purpose to invoke deeper though implicit meaning. There are at least two such main cases:

A) The first case is *the clash case*, where the creator presumably means to observe the Cooperative Principle, and yet he obviously is violating a maxim while conforms to another maxim; if he is not inept, he must mean something additional to what he is merely saying. For example, when Magritte painted the "The Treachery of Images" or "This is not a pipe", that would appear to be flouting either the maxim of *quality* or *quantity* while conforming to the Cooperative Principle. Since there is no reason in this case to doubt that Magritte means to observe the Cooperative Principle and is obviously capable of doing so, then his painting must mean something other that what it expressly asserts. Thus, one thing is clear: The purpose of his intended violation was to create a new dialog between art and its viewers. Magritte wanted to create new situations for the viewers to question the following: "what the subject is," "how a subject matters," and "how the subjectivity works in formulating the subject matter." Thus, he incorporates into his paintings a dialogic situation not between the painter and the viewer, nor between the real world and its representative world, but among the object, the vision of the object, and the interpretation of the vision. Consequently, the dialogue would most often hinge on "the preconscious," i.e., the habit and habitat of the seeing subject and the seen object. In Magritte's own words (Gablik, 1988: 112-14):

> The first question elicited to the viewer's "understanding" might not be "What does this painting mean?" nor "What is the thing he painted?" but rather be "What do you think before viewing the painting?" And his manner of conversation is evocative – he does not inform the viewers of a world of fantasy or dream as many surrealists (such as Dali) do; instead, he rather endeavors to share with us his experiences of reflection and retrospection on the presupposed "objective knowledge." He points out the multiplicity within physical objects that "my investigations resembled the pursuit of *the solution to a problem for which I had three data: the object, the thing*

II. *Maxims of Quality*: Supermaxim: Try to make your contribution one that is true. 1. Do not say what you believe to be false. 2. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence
III. *Maxim of Relation*: Be relevant.
IV. *Maxims of Manner*: Supermaxim: Be perspicuous. 1. Avoid obscurity /of expression. 2. Avoid ambiguity. 3. Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity). 4. Be orderly.

> *connected with it in the shadow of my consciousness, and the light wherein that thing would become apparent.*

Magritte could have communicated his intentions only by seemingly violating one or more maxims, while presumably observing the Cooperative Principle in purpose to make the viewers ask the right question. He wants to leave the viewer to wonder about his intentions.

B) The second case is *the exploitation case*, where the creator presumably means to observe the Cooperative Principle, and yet he obviously fails to fulfill a given maxim. These cases are those in which a maxim appears to be violated but where, upon further reflection, the viewers can figure out, on the assumption that the creator is being generally cooperative, how the creator is being subtly cooperative. This situation is one that characteristically gives rise to a conversational implicature (Grice 1988: 30). One possibility is that he could not fulfill both the Cooperative Principle and another maxim as well, since there is a conflict in these particular circumstances. The other more relevant possibility is that this was his way to communicate a deeper meaning in an indirect way. The key is to be able to distinguish conversational implicatures from meaning, since certain implications of an utterance are to be analyzed as depending on factors other than explicit meaning. This kind of analysis requires some methods for telling when an implicature is a conversational one and when it is just conventional. The tentative definition of conversational implication, as opposed to conventional ones, is as follows (cf. Grice, 1988: 30-1):

> A creator of a visual object who, by exhibiting the object to be viewed, means that *p* but has implicated that *q*, provided that
> (1) He is to be presumed to be observing the conversational maxims, or at least the cooperative principle.
> (2) The supposition that he is aware that *q* is required in order to understand as if his visual object means that *p*.
> (3) The creator thinks, and would expect the viewer to think that he so thinks, that it is within the competence of the viewer to work out that supposition (2) is required.

Magritte's "This is not a pipe" is a good case for testing the conversational implicature, since what is implied in this painting is its real meaning. In this painting, Magritte fails to fulfill the first Maxim of Quantity because to do so (i.e., to make your contribution as informative as is required) would, under the circumstances of his painting, infringe the forth Maxim of Manner (i.e., to be perspicuous; to avoid obscurity; and to avoid ambiguity). Therefore, Magritte, by violating one maxim, invokes another, and implies thereby that there is more to his painting than one can grasp on the surface of it. (Grice uses the term "violate" to characterize any failure to fulfill a maxim, Grice 1975a: 49-52). Magritte's "This is not a pipe" involves different components, which are suggested by the painting. To name some of the important ones: (1) a picture of a pipe, or a series of lines, curves and colors that *resembles* a real pipe. (2) The word "this" ("ceci") in the sentence "this is not a pipe" ("ceci n'est pas une pipe"). (3) The series of curves that go to make up the painted sentence "this is not a pipe" ("ceci n'est pas une pipe"). (4) The concept of a real pipe in the real world, the verbal definition of a pipe, and the visual representation of it. (5) The painting itself in terms of its pictorial representation as a possible reference to the tangible item that is "this" ("ceci").

The painting and its puzzle revolve around the word "this", which can actually refer to any one of a number of contractedly different "things": The word in the English language, the picture of a pipe, the painting as a whole, the sentence within the painting. The first glance, instinctive opinion that it *is* a pipe, is only reached through an *assumption* about how we, as thinking humans, *perceive our own relationship with pictures, words, and the world*. It is only through a familiar, though somewhat arbitrarily defined convenience that we see the painting as "wrong", and hence why it is so confusing to us.

As an analogy, the same can be said of any symbols that we use - alphabets and numbers, for example, all hold their power only because their *meaning* has been widely agreed upon. Without this common "mapping" to some concept, the symbols themselves are useless. To understand "this is not a pipe", or at least to find it non-confusing, we need to break down the conformities and established rules that we take for granted in the way that we think. Perhaps by doing this, we may also be more accustomed to observing more closely other aspects of ourselves that we do not normally think about. "This is not a pipe" breaks off with the either/or dichotomy of Aristotle and open the way for more than two binary options available for interpretation.

If we judge Magritte's painting under normal circumstances, and we assume that Magritte is following the Cooperative Principle, we must ask ourselves why Magritte did not write "This is a pipe"? The latter is the right and correct caption under normal conditions. Moreover, the viewers can be expected by Magritte to know of the existence of the correct and right caption and of the epistemic regularity of naming and referring. Thus, if it were indeed not a pipe, Magritte would have known that fact and would, under the cooperative assumption, have informed us. Thus, we can infer by *modus tollens* that Magritte intends us to question that it is a pipe after all. Furthermore, since he was in a position to know, we can infer that he intends us to question something subtle about a cluster of concepts, such as naming, referring, representation and reality.

The first, and most diagnostically useful, feature is cancelability. Since the demonstration of the implicatures depends on several premises, by denying one of those premises, either overtly or indirectly, the path to the implicature can be blocked. In our example, Magritte could do one of the following options that Foucault mentions in his discussion (Foucault, 1973: 30):

> ..."This is not a pipe, but a drawing of a pipe," "This is not a pipe but a sentence saying that this is not a pipe," 'The sentence 'this is not a pipe' is not a pipe," "In the sentence 'this is not a pipe.' *This* is not a pipe: the painting, written sentence, drawing of a pipe – all this is not a pipe."

If Magritte had done any of these possibilities, then the implication is cancelled and we are left with the banality of the outcome. Magritte obviously aimed at a more elaborate artistic purpose. This last implicature is inferred by us on the ground that Magritte did not add a second sentence thus:

> This is not a pipe.
> But all this is just nonsense, not worthy of anything.

Then the implication is cancelled because we know the creator is not being fully cooperative. The only way Magritte could achieve such discussions about his ideas in the painting is through the saying more implicitly via purposely violating the maxims.

These two kinds of maxim-violation, which convey an unstated but meant meaning, are two kinds of what Grice call "conversational implicature." By judiciously relying on the Cooperative Principle and maxims in such ways, creators of visual objects often succeed in communicating, by "implicating," more than what they say.

In case one, some implicatures flout a maxim so as invoke the Cooperative Principle as a ground of interpretation. Magritte's painting flouts the maxim of Quality (Try to make your contribution one that is true) on the literal level (what is said) so as to *invoke the same maxim* at a figurative level (what is implicated). Grice (1975a: 49,52) joins these two maneuvers in one general kind: each "exploits" a maxim. Irony and metaphors are two standard forms of maim-exploiting implicature. In case two, some implicature flout a maxim as to invoke another maxim as a ground of interpretation. Thus, if the painting says that "This is not a pipe" and yet there is a pipe, the painted pipe implicates, by invoking the maxim of Quality (Do not say what you believe to be false), that there is at least one interpretation that will solve the puzzle.

Visual objects are most likely to involve what Grice termed "generalized implicatures". He distinguishes between particularized and generalized implicatures (Grice, 1975: 39). In most cases, however, it is always a creator's *utterance*, the specific composition the creator chooses by which to construct his visual object, which carries an implicature. A generalized implicature is the situation where the presence of the implicature is relatively independent of the details of the particular conversational context. Only that such situation is rare and mostly symbolically simple. Particularized conversational implicatures depends heavily on context or occasion. However, visual objects are more likely utterances that do not, and thus have generalized conversational implicatures. Furthermore, the more interesting the case is, the more likely will be the case that the viewer may be unable to rule out one or more possible interpretation (Grice 1975:58 acknowledges such possibility). In such cases, the particular implicature or the thing implicated may be indeterminate, as in the case of Magritte's "This is not a pipe."

4. THE COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLE – THE PRESUPPOSITION OF BEING RATIONAL

In "Logic and Conversation", (1975a) Grice introduces the idea that linguistic exchanges are instances of shared rational purposive activity, governed by the cooperative principle and a set of more specific maxims that fall under it. He argues that observance of the Cooperative Principle is rational based on the identification between rationality and fruitfulness (Grice, 1988: 30). Grice's concept of rationality is not solely linguistics; he maintains that talking is "a special case or variety of purposive, indeed rational, behavior" (Grice 1975a:164). Accordingly, any symbolic system use is a form of rational action as long as it observes the Cooperative Principle. Thus, in creating a particular visual object as an utterance, the creator is creating that object *rather than a number of alternatives*.

On this view, the rationality of visual objects is a "means-ends" or instrumental rationality: given the goal of conveying a given utterance, the interaction between the creator, the visual object and the viewers is rational to the extent that its constitutive rules helps to secure this goal. The goal is stated clearly in advance, i.e. conveying a given meaning to the viewer and convincing him in its truthfulness or sincerity. For without a clear statement of goals, it would be impossible to determine the instrumental efficacy of

the whole purposive process, since on the means-ends conception such efficacy hinges on their ability to achieve those goals.

However, the beauty one can find in a symbolic system is its openness and the creativity in producing interpretations. The inferences involved in recovering implicatures are in most cases *ab*ductive, and to a lesser degree just inductive. This is the reason why there is no guarantee that this process of recovering implicatures will generate a unique explanation for a creator's representation of a visual object as an utterance. There is no special problem of understanding for abductive since it is not obvious that in the relevant cases a completely determinate implicature is present.

In cases of creating exceptional visual objects, the creators *attempt* to implicate something while knowing the viewers are in the dark as to certain crucial background and contextual information. The creator can *succeed* in implicating what he intends in such circumstances depend on supplying the missing information necessary for the generation of implicatures. Contextual information and background knowledge do make a difference in cases where in the intention is go produce unusual implicatures. However, the process itself is inherently abductive in nature. Peirce describes abduction as "…the process of forming explanatory hypotheses. It is the only logical operation which introduces any new idea" (Quoted in Frankfurt, 1958: 593). There is the seeming paradox that haunts the notion of abduction, namely that hypotheses are the products of a wonderful imaginative faculty and yet that they are products of a certain sort of logical inference. Peirce tries to settles the dilemma in his philosophy, an issue beyond the scope of this paper. However, abduction is a process that on the phenomenological level is a human fact. Yet, the process is more creative than procedural, which is one reason why exceptional visual objects such as Magritte's "this is not a pipe" inspire us to re-think the conventional.

link to commentary

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