Review of Paul Grice, S*tudies in the Ways of Words*
Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989

Paul Grice and the Philosophy of Language

Stephen Neale

(April 3, 1992)

The work of the late Paul Grice (1913–1988) exerts a powerful influence on the way philosophers, linguists, and cognitive scientists think about meaning and communication. With respect to a particular sentence ϕ and an "utterer" *U*, Grice stressed the philosophical importance of separating (i) what ϕ means, (ii) what *U said* on a given occasion by uttering ϕ, and (iii) what *U meant* by uttering ϕ on that occasion. Second, he provided systematic attempts to say precisely what meaning is by providing a series of more refined analyses of utterer's meaning, sentence meaning, and what is said. Third, Grice produced an account of how it is possible for what *U* says and what *U* means to diverge. Fourth, by characterizing a philosophically important distinction between the "genuinely semantic" and "merely pragmatic" implications of a statement, Grice clarified the relationship between classical logic and the semantics of natural language. Fifth, he provided some much needed philosophical ventilation by deploying his notion of "implicature" to devastating effect against certain overzealous strains of "Ordinary Language Philosophy," without himself abandoning the view that philosophy must pay attention to the nuances of ordinary talk. Sixth, Grice undercut some of the most influential arguments for a philosophically significant notion of "presupposition."

Today, Grice's work lies at the center of research on the semantics-pragmatics distinction and shapes much discussion of the relationship between language and mind. In a nutshell, Grice has forced philosophers and linguists to think very carefully about the sorts of facts a semantic theory is supposed to account for and to reflect upon the most central theoretical notions, notions that otherwise might be taken for granted or employed without due care and attention. To be sure, Grice's own positive proposals have their weaknesses; but in the light of his work any theory of meaning that is to be taken at all seriously must now draw a sharp line between genuinely semantic facts and facts pertaining to the nature of human interaction.

With the publication of Grice's book *Studies in the Way of Words*[1] (henceforth *Studies*), it is now considerably easier to see some of the connections between the various projects that constitute Grice's philosophy of language and to see why detailed examinations of certain locutions in natural language figure so prominently in Grice's broader philosophical inquiries. First, Grice's William James Lectures (delivered at Harvard in 1967) are published in *Studies* in complete form for the first time (with a few revisions completed in 1987).[2] Second, the collection contains a number of papers in which Grice's own brand of linguistic philosophizing sheds light on such matters as perception, rationality, certainty, and skepticism. Third, Grice provides a "Retrospective Epilogue" in which he attempts to explain the connections between the various "strands" of his work, as they were originally conceived and also as they revealed themselves to him over the years.

In addition to the seven essays that comprise the William James Lectures, *Studies* contains twelve further essays, six of which have been published elsewhere. Four previously published papers are not to be found in *Studies*: Grice's first publication "Personal Identity" (1941); his contribution to a collection for W. V. Quine, "Vacuous Names" (1969); his British Academy lecture "Intention and Uncertainty" (1971); and his APA Presidential Address "Method in Philosophical Psychology: From the Banal to the Bizarre" (1975). Each of these papers is a minor classic and hooks up in interesting ways with the work on display in *Studies*. In view of the relative difficulty in obtaining the volumes in which the last three appear, it is hoped that each will be republished in subsequent volumes of Grice's work.[3]

In preparing *Studies*, there has been some pruning of certain previous publications, two instances of which certainly should be mentioned. In view of the fact that the book contains the complete William James Lectures, evidently a decision was taken to delete that section of the 1961 paper "The Causal Theory of Perception" in which Grice first introduced the notion of a *conversational implicature* (though not under this label). This is unfortunate. Not only is section 3 of the original paper of undeniable historical importance, it also contains valuable discussions of presupposition, conventional implicature, generalized conversational implicature, and the vehicles of implication that are not quite replicated anywhere in the James Lectures. The section on implicature in Grice's 1981 paper "Presupposition and Conversational Implicature" has suffered a

---

1 Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989.

2 Mimeographed and photocopied typescripts of these lectures have been circulating for many years and substantial portions of many of the lectures appeared in four papers published between 1968 and 1978. Parts of Lectures VIII and IX were published as Grice (1968), which appears with important additions as Essay 6 of *Studies.* Parts of Lectures VI and VII were published as Grice (1969a), which appears with important additions as Essay 5. A version of Lecture II was published as Grice (1975a), which appears in only slightly emended form as Essay 2. A version of Lecture III was published as Grice (1978), which appears in only slightly emended form as Essay 3.

3 "Method in Philosophical Psychology" has recently been reprinted in Grice (1991).

similar fate. This time it is valuable discussions of generalized conversational implicature and calculability that are missing.

The purpose of the present article is to provide a critical commentary on the development of Grice's work on language and meaning on display in *Studies*. By way of carrying out this task, I shall try to assess the overall importance of this work and the seriousness of a number of influential objections to it. I shall also endeavor to tie up various loose ends and suggest ways of reconstructing Grice's thoughts with a view to eradicating a number of apparent unclarities and uncertainties. Although the "Retrospective Epilogue" in *Studies* goes some way toward supplying missing pieces and forging important connections between various Gricean themes, a substantial amount of detective work is still needed if one is to present Grice's work on meaning and language in anything like its best light. Much of the discussion will be laced with exegesis, if only for the reason that establishing what Grice is up to can sometimes be hard work and misunderstandings can easily arise.[4]

Very roughly, the first half of the article will focus on Grice's theoretical distinctions and the uses to which they have been put by Grice and others with an interest in drawing a sharp distinction between semantic and nonsemantic facts. The second half of the article concerns Grice's forbidding philosophical analyses of the central concepts employed by philosophers of language and theoretical linguists. Such a division might suggest that I am aligning myself with those who see Grice as presenting two unrelated theories, the "Theory of Conversation" and the "Theory of Meaning" (some discussions or attempted refinements of the Theory of Conversation that either ignore or explicitly reject Grice's intention-based approach to meaning). But it will become clear that there are important connections between the account of meaning and the account of conversational implicature that have not attracted the attention they deserve. Very likely some of the connections were made by Grice only in the course of working out this or that detail (for such is the process of philosophizing); but there is no doubt that Grice's work on language and meaning constitutes a more powerful and interesting contribution to philosophy and linguistics when it is *not* seen as comprising two utterly distinct theories. It is at least arguable that the "Theory of Conversation" is a component of the "Theory of Meaning." And even if this interpretation is resisted, it is undeniable that the theories are mutually illuminating and supportive, and that they are of more philosophical, linguistic, and historical interest if the temptation is resisted to discuss them in isolation from one another. To a large extent, this conviction will shape the entire discussion.

---

4 Nothing will be said about the details of the many important projects Grice has influenced, such as those undertaken by (e.g.) Avramides (1990), Bach and Harnish (1979), Bennett (1976), Gazdar (1979), Harnish (1976), Leech (1983), Levinson (1983), Loar (1981), Schiffer (1972), Searle (1969), and Sperber and Wilson (1986). I shall, however, draw upon some of the discussions, criticisms, and refinements of Grice's proposals made in these and other works.

1. Meaning and Use

As far as contemporary work in the philosophy of language is concerned, it is common to see Grice's attempts to distinguish between semantic and pragmatic implications as his major contribution. But it should not be overlooked that Grice's own interest in natural language was not confined to the delimitation and systematization of genuinely semantic facts. Grice felt that a number of promising approaches to important philosophical problems had been written off rather unfairly as a result of unsound linguistic maneuvers executed by philosophers impressed by the nuances of ordinary language.[5] It is important for a proper understanding of Grice's work to get a sense of the sorts of problems he was up against and a sense of his own curious position with respect to the movement often called "Ordinary Language Philosophy." For Grice was at once an accomplished practitioner and the most resourceful critic of this style of philosophizing.

Under the influence of Wittgenstein, the view that the only useful thing to say about the meaning of an expression is that it is used in such-and-such a way, or is usable in such-and-such circumstances, came to exercise a powerful influence on philosophy as practiced in postwar Oxford. It was common for Austin, Ryle, and others to undercut a philosophical position or dispose of a philosophical problem by pointing to a misuse of some expression playing an essential rôle in the presentation of the position or problem. This was often done by highlighting some characteristic feature of the use of the expression in question, and then demonstrating that the statement of the position or problem in question was, or required being, insensitive to this feature. Two simple examples will set the scene. In *The Concept of Mind*, Ryle says that

> In their most ordinary employment 'voluntary' and 'involuntary' are used, with a few minor elasticities, as adjectives applying to actions which ought not to be done. We discuss whether someone's action was voluntary or not only when the action seems to have been his fault. (p. 69).

And it is only because philosophers have been prone to misuses of the expression "voluntary," extending it to actions where there is no question of fault, says Ryle, that they have so easily come up with the traditional problem of free will. If philosophers were to guard against such unwarranted departures from ordinary usage, they would find it difficult to formulate a genuine philosophical problem here.

A second example concerns any attempt to provide analyses of *knowledge* in terms of *belief* along the following lines: *A* knows that *p* if and only if (i) *A* believes that *p*, (ii) *p*, and (iii) *A* is justified in believing that *p*. To this suggestion it might be charged that it is a feature of the use of the verb 'believe' that one does not use it if one can sincerely use the verb 'know' in its stead. Such a claim might be backed up by appealing to the observation that it would be quite inappropriate for *A* to say "I believe that my wife is ill"

---

5 In a similar vein, see also Searle (1969).

when *A* knows that his wife is ill. And so it might be concluded that the proposed analysis must be discarded because clause (i) does such violence to the ordinary use of the verb 'believe'.[6]

Out of this general concern for the nuances of ordinary talk, there emerged in Oxford a reaction to the view that expressions of natural language have an exact semantics that can be captured using the devices of classical logic. The revolt began officially in 1950 with the publication in *Mind* of Strawson's "On Referring," essentially a full-scale attack on Russell's Theory of Descriptions. According to Russell, the proposition expressed by a sentence of the form 'the *F* is *G*' is the general (quantificational) proposition that there is exactly one *F* and every *F* is *G*. As such, the proposition has one of the standard truth values and can be completely characterized using quantifier-variable notation:

$$(\exists x)((\forall y)(Fy \equiv y{=}x)\ \&\ Gx).$$

Strawson argued against Russell's theory on the grounds that it (a) fails to do justice to the way speakers ordinarily use sentences containing descriptive phrases to make statements and (b) rides roughshod over important distinctions (such as the distinction between the meaning of a sentence ϕ and the statement made by a particular use of ϕ). It is a part of the meaning of 'the *F*', Strawson originally claimed, that such an expression is used correctly only if there is an *F*. If this condition is not satisfied (if the "presupposition" that there is an *F* is false, as he was later to put it), a use of e.g. 'the *F* is *G*' cannot be considered to express a proposition that is either true or false.[7] So the view, perhaps borrowed from classical logic, that every use of an indicative sentence involves the expression of a truth or a falsehood must be abandoned.

In his closing paragraph, Strawson suggests that the very idea of a theory of meaning for a natural language based on classical logic is misguided:

> Neither Aristotelian nor Russellian rules give the exact logic of any expression of ordinary language; for ordinary language has no exact logic (p. 344).

Two years later, Strawson backed up this claim with his influential text *Introduction to Logical Theory,* in which, among other things, he launched an attack on the view that the logic of the formal devices '&', '$\vee$', '$\supset$', '$(\forall x)$', '$(\exists x)$', and '(ιx)' captures the meanings of the natural language expressions 'and', 'or', 'if', 'every', 'a', and 'the'. A single example, modified somewhat, will suffice. If an utterer *U* asserts a sentence of the form '*p* or *q*', *U* will standardly be taken to imply that he has non truth-functional grounds for the assertion, i.e. *U* will standardly be taken to imply that he does not know which of *p* and *q* is true. The ordinary language philosopher impressed by this observation might then conclude that an utterance of '*p* or *q*' in which this condition is not satisfied involves

---

6 Grice provides further examples in Essays 1 and 15.

7 My wording here is supposed to be neutral between (a) a proposition is expressed but it is neither true nor false, and (b) no proposition is expressed at all. Strawson is not consistent on this matter. For discussion, see Neale (1990) ch. 2.

a misuse of language. It is, in some sense, *part of the meaning* of '*p* or *q*', that such a locution is used correctly only if the speaker does not know that *p* is true and does not know that *q* is true. If this condition is not satisfied, the utterance cannot be taken to express a truth. And so, the ordinary language philosopher might conclude, it would be a serious mistake to suppose that the meaning of the English word 'or' is given by the semantics of the logical particle '∨'; the semantics of '∨' is *stipulated* by the logician to be truth-functional, but the semantics of 'or' is determined by actual linguistic practice (use), which does not square with the logician's truth-functional analysis.

Grice himself was an exceptional practitioner of ordinary language philosophy and broadly sympathetic to many of its aims and methods. Indeed, his own philosophy of language involves both an original refinement and an original critique of the idea of *meaning* as *use*. In his first publication on meaning, his 1957 article "Meaning" (Essay 14 of *Studies*), Grice expresses allegiance to the position that a theory of meaning must, in some sense, be sensitive to use. In this paper, Grice presents his first attempts to say exactly what meaning is. It ought to be possible, he suggests, to explicate the meaning of an expression (or any other sign) in terms of what its users *do with it*, i.e. in terms of what its users (could/would/should) mean by it on particular occasions of use. Two important ideas came out of Grice's sensitivity to use. The first is that the most "basic" notion of meaning is that of an utterer *U* meaning something by doing something on a particular occasion. All other notions of meaning are to be treated as "derivative" and "explicated" in terms of the more basic notion. As Grice puts it in "Retrospective Epilogue,"

> . . . it is necessary to distinguish between a notion of meaning which is relativized to the users of words or expressions and one that is not so relativized; . . . of the two notions the unrelativized notion is posterior to, and has to be understood in terms of, the relativized notion; what words mean is a matter of what people mean by them (p. 340).

The second idea is that the locution 'by uttering *x*, *U* meant that *p*' can be analysed in terms of complex audience-directed intentions on the part of *U*.[8] And what is, for all intents and purposes, almost a consequence of these two ideas, sentence meaning (more broadly, *utterance-type* meaning) can be analysed (roughly) in terms of regularities over the intentions with which utterers produce those sentences on given occasions. What *U* means by producing *x* on a given occasion is a function of what *U* intends, in a complex way, to *get across* to his audience. The basic idea put forward in "Meaning" (and subsequently refined in his William James Lectures) is, very roughly, that for an "indicative-type" utterance, the locution 'by uttering *x*, *U* meant that *p*' expresses a truth if and only if *U* uttered *x* intending to produce in some audience *A* the belief that *p* by means of *A*'s recognition of this intention.

---

8 Throughout, I shall follow Grice in using the terms "utter" (together with "uttering" and "utterance") in such a way as to be applicable to "any case of doing *x* or producing *x* by the performance of which *U* meant that so-and-so" (p. 118). The act or performance in question does not have to be linguistic, conventional, or established in any way.

The details of this proposal and its rôle in the analysis of (e.g.) sentence meaning will be addressed in sections 4 and 5. I want now to examine Grice's earliest published responses to two particular applications of the methods of ordinary language philosophy, bearing in mind that, on Grice's own account, utterer's meaning and ultimately sentence meaning are to be cashed out in terms of utterers' intentions.

In his 1961 address to the Aristotelian Society ("The Causal Theory of Perception," Essay 15 of *Studies*), Grice seeks to "rehabilitate" a version of the view that

> the elucidation of the notion of perceiving a material object will include some reference to the rôle of the material object perceived in the causal ancestry of the perception or of the sense-impression or sense-datum involved in the perception" (pp. 224–225).

Taking a lead from H. H. Price's version of the causal theory,

> . . . the thesis that "I am perceiving *M*" (in one sense of that expression) is to be regarded as equivalent to "I am having (or sensing) a sense-datum which is caused by *M"* (p. 225).

Grice is thus faced with the task of providing a satisfactory account of the meaning of the technical expression "sense-datum." Unimpressed by attempts to prove the existence of "special entities" to be called sense-data, he opts for the introduction of 'sense-datum' as a technical term that should receive a contextual definition. Each theoretical sentence containing an apparent reference to a sense-datum is to be translated into a sentence of ordinary English in which there is no such reference. The favored form of translation, although not specified precisely by Grice, involves pairing each "sense-datum statement" with an "*L*-statement" of the form '*X* looks (sounds/feels, etc.) ϕ to *A*' (e.g., "that looks red to me"), an idea floated by Ayer. Grice was not so much troubled by the details of the translation itself but by an *in principle* objection to any theory employing locutions of the form '*X* looks ϕ to *A*': such a theory cannot succeed because in many cases of perception, the requisite *L*-statement would be without truth-value, meaningless, inapplicable, or inappropriate. For example, ". . . there would be something at least *prima facie* odd about my saying 'That looks red to me' (not as a joke) when I am confronted by a British pillar-box in normal daylight at a range of a few feet" (p. 227). It is an essential feature of the meaning, or use, of '*X* looks ϕ to *A*', says the objector, that it is used correctly only if the speaker knows or believes that it is not the case that *X* is ϕ, or thinks that someone might doubt or deny that *X* is ϕ. In a situation in which this condition (the *D-or-D condition*, as Grice calls it) is not fulfilled, the objector continues, a use of this sentence will not express a truth, as Grice's theory requires. And so the theory must be discarded on the grounds that it fails to be fully general.

The details of such an objection might be spelled out in a number of different ways. The *D*-or-*D* condition might be taken to correspond to an *entailment* of the statement made by uttering '*X* looks ϕ to *A*', in which case the entailing statement would be false. Alternatively, the *D*-or-*D* condition might be taken to correspond to a *presupposition* of the statement, in which case the presupposing statement would be neither true nor false. It is the latter version of the objection that Grice took more seriously.

Unfortunately, it is not entirely clear who is supposed to have assailed the CTP in this way because "The Causal Theory of Perception" contains no reference to any work in which this "frequently propounded" objection appears. In "Prolegomena" (Essay 1 of *Studies*), Grice claims that the objection was one "frequently raised by those sympathetic to Wittgenstein" (p. 6). One can only surmise that some form of the objection came from Austin or Warnock. It was almost certainly Austin's polemic in *Sense and Sensibilia* that convinced Grice of the futility of attempts to prove the existence of sense-data by forms of the Argument from Illusion.[9] Although Austin does explicitly say in *Sense and Sensibilia* (at p. 46, note 2) that he will not be attacking the method of introducing sense-data favored by causal theorists such as Price and Ayer, it is reasonable to think that the same enemy of sense-data was one of those who brought up the objection that worried Grice.

It was Grice's view that this particular objection was based on an uncritical application of the methods of ordinary language philosophy:

> . . . the position adopted by my objector seems to me to involve a type of maneuver which is characteristic of more than one contemporary mode of philosophizing. I am not condemning this type of maneuver; I am merely suggesting that to embark on it without due caution is to risk collision with the facts. Before we rush ahead to exploit the linguistic nuances which we have detected, we should make sure that we are reasonably clear what sort of nuances they are (p. 237).

It is very clear from this remark that Grice was not abandoning or distancing himself from the sorts of maneuvers that are likely to result from paying careful attention to ordinary discourse. As he put it at the beginning of his William James Lectures,

> . . . if it is any part of one's philosophical concern, as it is of mine, to give an accurate general account of the actual meaning of this or that expression in nontechnical discourse, then one simply cannot afford to abandon this kind of maneuver altogether. So there is an obvious need for a method . . . for distinguishing its legitimate from its illegitimate applications (p. 3).

And later:

> I continue to believe that a more or less detailed study of the way we talk, in this or that region of discourse, is an indispensable foundation for much of the most fundamental kind of philosophizing (1986, p. 58).

---

9 Although Grice may have been impressed with the arguments in *Sense and Sensibilia* against this method of demonstrating the existence of sense-data, he had grave reservations about that work as a whole:

> I have never been very happy about Austin's *Sense and Sensibilia*, partly because the philosophy which it contains does not seem to me to be, for the most part, of the highest quality, but more because its tone is frequently rather unpleasant. And similar incidents have been reported not so long ago from the USA. So far as I know, no one has ever been the better for receiving a good thumping, and I do not see that philosophy is enhanced by such episodes. There are other ways of clearing the air besides nailing to the wall everything in sight (1986, p. 62).

The main thoughts behind this remark are set out in "Prolegomena" (Essay 1), "Postwar Oxford Philosophy" (Essay 10), "Conceptual Analysis and the Province of Philosophy" (Essay 11), and "Retrospective Epilogue." In dealing with a number of objections to "The Ordinary Language Approach to Philosophy" Grice serves up a rich and subtle account of how he sees the relationship between philosophical inquiry and the analysis of ordinary discourse. At the end of the day, although the ordinary use of language is to be accorded a high position in philosophy, to claim that the meaning of an expression is a function of what its users do with it is not to claim that we must *identify* meaning and use:

> . . . the precept that one should be careful not to confuse meaning and use is perhaps on the way toward being as handy a philosophical vade-mecum as once was the precept that one should be careful to identify them (p. 4).

According to Grice, not only will we get ourselves into trouble if we are insensitive to facts about actual usage, we will also suffer if we fail to distinguish *semantic* from *pragmatic* implications, if we fail to distinguish

> (to speak loosely) what *our words* say or imply from what *we* in uttering them imply; a distinction seemingly denied by Wittgenstein, and all too frequently ignored by Austin (1986, p. 59).

While it might be *extremely odd* to say '*X* looks red to me' in circumstances in which the relevant *D*-or-*D* condition does not obtain, it does not follow, says Grice, (a) that the statement is false, (b) that the statement is gibberish, (c) that no statement is made, or (d) that it is "part of the meaning" of '*X* looks red to me' that the *D*-or-*D* condition obtains. In normal circumstances, someone who uttered '*X* looks red to me' might well be implying or suggesting that there is or might be doubt (in someone's mind) as to the color of *X*, but this is no part of what the sentence (or the statement made) implies.

The justification for this claim can be understood my thinking more about the case of the connective 'or'. By uttering a sentence of the form '*p* or *q*', *U* may well imply or suggest that he has non-truth-functional grounds for his assertion; but this is not part of what the sentence (or the statement made) implies. As Grice puts it,

> . . . the fact that the utterance of the disjunctive sentence normally involves the implication of the speaker's ignorance of the truth-values of the disjuncts is, I should like to say, to be explained by reference to a general principle governing the use of language. Exactly what this principle is I am uncertain, but a *first shot* would be the following: "One should not make a weaker statement rather than a stronger one unless there is a good reason for so doing" (1961, p. 132).

The last sentence of this passage seems to contain the first formulation in one of Grice's own works of a "pragmatic rule" or "maxim of conversation."[10]

---

[10] Grice's approach to the relation between the logical devices and their counterparts in ordinary language is first mentioned in print by Strawson in his 1952 book *Introduction to Logical Theory*. At p. 179, note 1, Strawson attributes to Grice the view that many of the alleged divergences are the products of "pragmatic" rather than "logical" implications. The footnote in question also contains a "pragmatic rule" that is clearly an ancestor of the conversational maxims: ". . . one does not make the

If the distinction between semantic and pragmatic implications has utility only in defending causal theories of perception and truth-functional analyses of a few sentential connectives, it has the hallmark of a technical distinction concocted by a philosopher determined to defend pet theories come what may. But it would be a travesty to characterize Grice's distinction in this way. Grice felt that any adequate explanation of the possibility of pragmatic implications attaching to uses of phenomenal verbs or sentential connectives ought to be a consequence of a completely *general* theory. In order to demonstrate beyond doubt the existence of pragmatic implications distinct from semantic implications, Grice brought up an extreme example (variations of which occur in both "The Causal Theory of Perception" and "Logic and Conversation"[11]). Suppose Professor *A* asks Professor *U* for an evaluation of his student Mr *X*. All *U* says is "Mr *X* has excellent handwriting and is always very punctual." If *U* leaves it at that, those present are likely to conclude that *U* thinks Mr *X* is not much good at philosophy. There is no temptation to say that the proposition that Mr *X* is not much good (or that *U* thinks Mr *X* is not much good) at philosophy is (or is a consequence of) the statement *U* made. The sentence *U* uttered has a clear linguistic meaning based on the meanings of its parts and their syntactical arrangement; and it seems quite wrong to say that, when he uttered that sentence, *U* made the statement that Mr *X* is not much good at philosophy. On the other hand, it seems quite natural to say that, in the circumstances, what *U meant* (or part of what *U* meant) by making the statement he in fact made was that Mr *X* is not much good (or that *U* thinks Mr *X* is not much good) at philosophy. This is something that *the utterer* implied by making the statement he made in this particular context, not something implied by the sentence uttered (or, better, not something implied by the statement *U* made). In short, there is an important distinction to be made between the statement *U* made by uttering *x* and what *U* meant by uttering *x*.

There seems little doubt that any plausible theory of language will have to avail itself of a distinction along these lines if it is to be taken seriously. But Grice was not content with an intuitive division between semantic and pragmatic implication; he wanted a full-fledged theoretical account of the division (and perhaps further subdivisions) that was compatible with his own account of meaning. And this was the task he set himself in his William James Lectures. The main task was broken down into three subtasks. The first was to present an account of the possibility of pragmatic implication that meshed with his own fledgling philosophical psychology. The second subtask was to improve upon the analysis of utterer's meaning given in "Meaning." The third subtask was to use the revised analysis to provide accounts of sentence meaning and the statement made (in that order). It seems to have been Grice's view that he would then be in a position to specify the conditions under which an implication was genuinely semantic. He could then appeal

(logically) lesser, when one could truthfully (and with greater or equal linguistic economy) make the greater claim."

11 It appears in section 3 of "The Causal Theory of Perception," the section that is unfortunately not reproduced in *Studies*.

much more confidently to the distinction between semantic and pragmatic implication in pursuit of other philosophical goals.

2. The Theory of Conversation

In his William James Lectures, Grice proposes to make a distinction within the "total signification" of a linguistic utterance between "what [*U*] has *said* (in a certain favored, and maybe in some degree artificial, sense of "said"), and what [*U*] has *implicated* (e.g. implied, indicated, suggested)" (p. 118).

(1) Although there is no explicit textual evidence on this matter, it is at least arguable that a specification of the "total signification" of an utterance *x* made by *U* is for Grice the same thing as a specification of what *U* meant by uttering *x*.

(2) What *U* said is ". . . to be closely related to the conventional meaning of the words (the sentence) he has uttered" (p. 25).[12] It seems to be Grice's view that, in some sense, the conventional meaning of the sentence uttered both falls short and goes beyond what is said. For a "full identification" of what *U* said on a particular occasion, one needs to establish, in addition to the conventional meaning of the sentence uttered, at least the references of any referring expressions (e.g., proper names, demonstratives, and indexicals) and the time and place of utterance. Although Grice is not as explicit as he might have been, it is clear upon reflection (and from scattered remarks) that *what is said* is to do duty (with a proviso I will get to in a moment) for *the statement made* or *the proposition expressed* by *U*. Where the sentence uttered is of the type conventionally associated with the speech act of asserting (i.e., when it is in the "indicative mood") what is said will be straightforwardly *truth-conditional*. In "Utterer's Meaning, Sentence Meaning, and Word Meaning," (Essay 6) Grice takes two additional sentence-types to be conventionally associated with "central" types of speech act: those in the "interrogative mood" and those in the "imperative mood." And it is clear from what Grice says in that essay, taken together with remarks in "Further Notes on Logic and Conversation" (Essay 3), that when *U* uses a sentence of any of these three forms, *U says* something, or at least *makes as if to say* something (on "making as if to say," see below). Where the sentence uttered is in the imperative or interrogative mood, what is said will not be straightforwardly truth-conditional, but it will be systematically related to the truth conditions of what *U* would have said, in the same context, by uttering the indicative counterpart (or one of the indicative counterparts) of the original sentence.[13]

(3) The conventional meaning of a sentence *goes beyond* what is said in the sense that there are conventional devices that signal the performance of "noncentral speech acts"

---

12 Grice's use of the word 'conventional' in 'conventional meaning' should not be taken too literally, for it is Grice's view that linguistic meaning is not to be explicated in terms of what other philosophers might think of as convention. On this matter, see section 6.

13 The nature of the connection between sentence-types and speech act-types is notoriously difficult to make precise. For extensive discussion and the view that a small number of basic speech act-types suffices for a theoretically adequate classification of our utterances, see Searle (1975).

parasitic upon the performance of "central speech acts" (p. 122). Such devices, although they play a part in determining what *U meant*, play no part in determining what *U said*. An example of such a device is the connective 'but'. If *U* utters the sentence

(1) She is poor but she is honest

rather than the sentence

(2) She is poor and she is honest

very likely *U* will be taken to be implying that there is (or that someone might think there is) some sort of contrast between poverty and honesty (or her honesty and her poverty). For Grice, this type of implication is no part of what *U* says because it does not contribute in any way to the *truth conditions* of the utterance. By uttering (1), *U* has *said* only that she is poor and she is honest; and this does not entail that there is any (e.g.) contrast between poverty and honesty (or between her poverty and her honesty). The implication in question Grice calls a *conventional implicature*. By uttering (1) *U* has *conventionally implicated* that (e.g.) her poverty should be contrasted with her honesty.

Grice's idea is that by uttering (1) *U* is performing two speech acts: *U* is saying that she is poor and she is honest; additionally, *U* is indicating or suggesting that someone (perhaps *U*) has a certain attitude toward what *is* said.[14] Unfortunately, Grice does not develop this idea and we are left with just the claim that a conventional implicature is determined (at least in part) by the (conventions governing) the words used.[15]

In "The Causal Theory of Perception," Grice points out that the sort of implication we have just been considering is not a *presupposition* (as originally defined by Strawson and adopted by others). β is a presupposition of α, just in case the truth or falsity of α requires the truth of β. (If the *truth* of α requires the truth of β, but the falsity of α does not, β is an *entailment* of α). More precisely, if α presupposes β, α lacks a truth value if β is false. But as Grice points out, in the case of an utterance of (1)

> . . . even if the implied proposition were false, i.e. if there were no reason in the world to contrast poverty with honesty either in general or in her case, the original statement could still be false; it would be false for example if she were rich and dishonest. One might perhaps be less comfortable about assenting to its truth if the implied contrast did not in fact obtain; but the possibility of falsity is enough for the immediate purpose (1961, p. 127).[16]

---

14 Taken this way, conventional implicature would seems very close to what Frege calls "coloring" or "tone." According to Frege, the connectives 'and' and 'but' have the same sense (as do the nouns 'horse' and 'steed') but differ in coloring. Together with other features of Frege's theory, this ensures that substituting 'but' for 'and' in a sentence will not lead to a difference in sense or a difference in truth value (reference).

15 The qualifier "at least in part" is needed because in many cases the particular conversational context will play a role in determining the precise content of a conventional implicature.

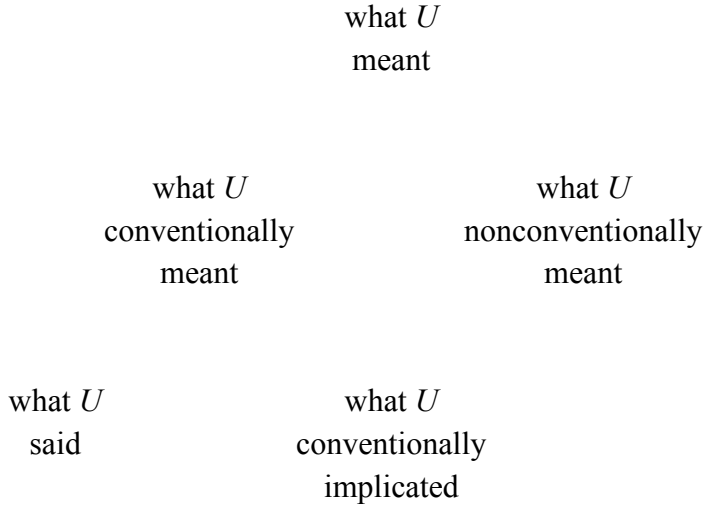
16 Again, I quote from the section of "The Causal Theory of Perception" not reproduced in *Studies.*

So the implication in question is not a presupposition, at least not on the standard semantic conception of that notion.[17]

A moment ago, I alluded to a proviso concerning the equation of what is said with the proposition expressed (or the statement made). Anyone who reads "Logic and Conversation" and "Further Notes" in isolation from the rest of the William James Lectures, is almost certain to miss the relationship that Grice sees between utterers' intentions and what is said. For something to be (part of) what *U* says on a particular occasion, it must also be (part of) what *U* meant, i.e. it must be backed by a complex intention of the sort that forms the backbone of Grice's Theory of Meaning. If *U* utters the sentence "Bill is an honest man" ironically, on Grice's account *U* will *not* have said that Bill is an honest man: *U* will have *made as if to say* that Bill is an honest man. For it is Grice's view that a statement of the form 'by uttering *x*, *U* said that *p*' entails the corresponding statement of the form 'by uttering *x*, *U* meant that *p*.' (This purported entailment forms the heart of Grice's attempt to analyse *saying* in terms of a "coincidence" of utterer's meaning and sentence meaning (p. 87; pp. 120–1) and will be addressed in section 5.) So on Grice's account, *one cannot unintentionally say something* (a fact that has interesting consequences for, e.g., slips of the tongue and misused expressions).

What *U* conventionally implicates and what *U* says are both "closely related to the conventional meaning" of the sentence uttered, and they are taken by Grice as exhausting *what U conventionally means* (p. 121). This wording suggests very strongly that what *U* says and what *U* conventionally implicates are part of what *U* means; so it seems reasonable to conclude that Grice would accept the following as providing one possible way of breaking down what *U* meant:

Fig. 1.

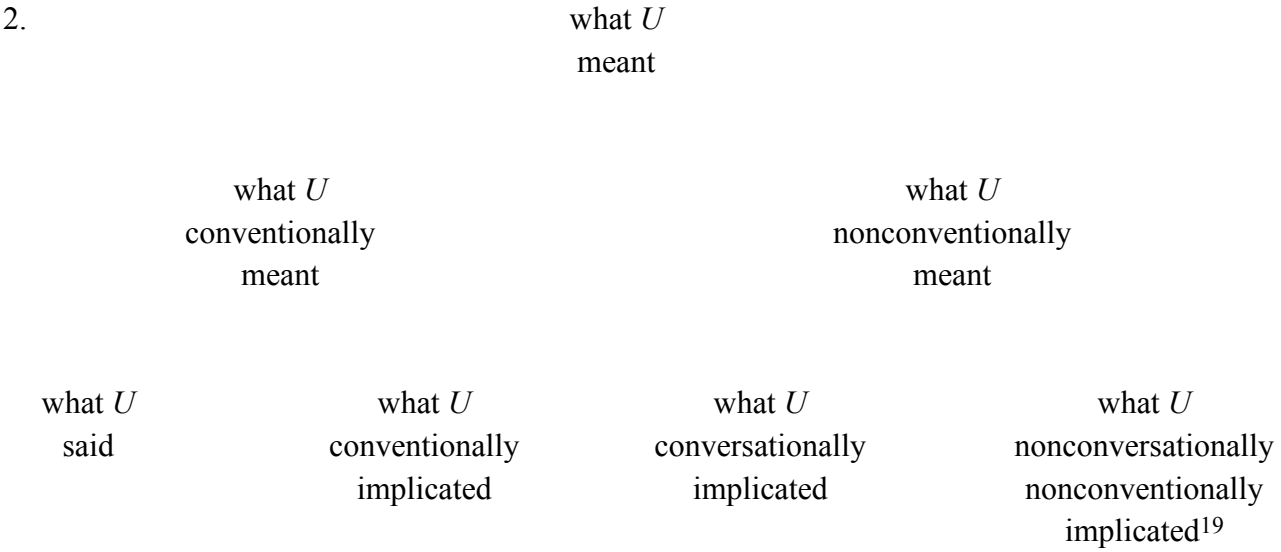


[17] At this stage, Grice leaves it open whether or not there is some other "pragmatic" notion of presupposition, distinct from implicature, that is of any theoretical utility. It is ultimately Grice's view that any alleged presupposition is either an entailment or an implicature, and hence the notion of presupposition, to the extent it was ever coherent, can be dispensed with altogether.

Let us now turn to what *U* nonconventionally meant. Consider again, the example concerning Professor *U*'s evaluation of Mr *X*. By uttering the sentence "Mr *X* has excellent handwriting and is always very punctual," *U* either said or made as if to say that Mr *X* has excellent handwriting and is always very punctual. In addition, on Grice's account *U conversationally implicated* that Mr *X* is not much good at philosophy (there is a *conversational implicature* to the effect that Mr *X* is not much good at philosophy). Conversational implicature is a species of pragmatic (nonsemantic, nonconventional) implication and is to be contrasted with the (at least partly semantic) implication that Grice calls conventional implicature. The principal difference between a conventional and a conversational implicature is that the existence of a conventional implicature depends upon the presence of some particular conventional device (such as 'but', 'moreover', 'still', 'yet', or heavy stress) whereas the existence of a conversational implicature does not. Other differences will be mentioned as we proceed.

So we reach the following breakdown of what *U* meant:[18]

Fig. 2.



Grice does a lot more than distinguish and label implications with different features. In "Logic and Conversation," he provides an account of the possibility of a divergence between what *U* says and what *U* means (or at least between what *U* conventionally means and what *U* means). Although the main points of Grice's account of conversational implicature are familiar enough, I want to set some of them out here so as to facilitate discussion. According to Grice, an account of possible divergences emerges

[18] The distinction between "generalized" and "particularized" conversational implicature is not represented in this diagram because it is theoretically inert (for Grice).

[19] I shall have nothing to say about nonconventional, nonconversational implicatures; Grice simply allows for the possibility of such implicatures and says that they are generated by "aesthetic, social, or moral" maxims (p. 28).

once we pay attention to the nature and purpose of rational interaction. He suggests that conversation is a characteristically purposeful and cooperative enterprise governed by what he calls the *Cooperative Principle*:

> 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 (p. 26).

Subsumed under this general principle, Grice distinguishes four categories of more specific maxims and submaxims enjoining truthfulness, informativeness, relevance, and clarity (pp. 26–27): *Quantity*: Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange). Do not make your contribution more informative than is required. *Quality*: Try to make your contribution one that is true. Specifically: (1) Do not say what you believe to be false; (2) Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence. *Relation*: Be relevant. *Manner*: Be perspicuous. Specifically: (1) Be brief; (2) Be orderly; (3) Avoid ambiguity; (4) Avoid obscurity of expression.

Grice's basic idea is that there is a systematic correspondence between what *U* means and the assumptions required in order to preserve the supposition that *U* is observing the Cooperative Principle and conversational maxims. In the case of Professor *U*'s evaluation of Mr *X*, on the surface there is an intentional and overt violation of the Cooperative Principle or of one or more of the maxims. By saying "Mr *X* has excellent handwriting and is always very punctual" (in this particular context), *U* seems at least to have violated one of the maxims of Quantity or the maxim of Relation (if Mr *X* is one of *U*'s students, *U* must be in a position to volunteer more relevant information than judgments about Mr *X*'s handwriting and timekeeping; furthermore, *U* knows that more information, or more relevant information, is required). The hearer is naturally led to the conclusion that *U* is trying to convey something else, something more relevant to the purposes at hand. In the circumstances, if *U* thought Mr *X* was any good at philosophy he would have said so. So *U* must think Mr *X* is no good at philosophy and be unwilling to say so. And so *U* has conversationally implicated that Mr *X* is no good at philosophy.

One interesting feature of this example is that it might well be the case that only what is implicated is meant (i.e., backed by *U*'s communicative intentions). *U* may have no idea what Mr *X*'s handwriting is like because Mr *X* has shown *U* only typed manuscripts of his work (or because he has never shown *U* anything), and *U* may have no opinion as to whether or not Mr *X* is punctual. In such a version of the envisioned scenario, *U* has only *made as if to say* that Mr *X* has excellent handwriting and is always very punctual because *U* had no intention of inducing (or activating) in his audience the belief that (*U* thinks that) Mr *X* has excellent handwriting and is always very punctual. The truth-values of what *U* said (or made as if to say) and what *U* conversationally implicated may of course differ. Mr *X* may have quite atrocious handwriting, and *U* may know this; but given the relevance of what is conversationally implicated, *U* may care very little about

the truth value of what he has said (or made as if to say). The primary message is to be found at the level of what is conversationally implicated.

In general, Grice claims, a speaker conversationally implicates that which he must be assumed to think

> . . . in order to preserve the assumption that he is observing the Cooperative Principle (and perhaps some conversational maxims as well), if not at the level of what is said, at least at the level of what is implicated (p. 86).

The idea would seem to be, then, that, at some overarching level of what is *meant*, *U* is presumed to be observing the Cooperative Principle. The wording of the maxims seems to suggest that some concern only what is said (e.g., 'Do not say what you believe to be false') while others concern, perhaps, what is *meant* (e.g., 'Be relevant').[20] We should probably treat this as something of an uncharacteristic looseness of expression on Grice's part. Except for the maxims under Manner (which can apply only to what is said) it seems reasonable to understand Grice as allowing a violation of a maxim at the level of what is said to be licensed or over-ridden by adherence at the level of what is implicated. On such a view, blatantly violating a maxim at the level of what is said but adhering to it at the level of what is implicated would not necessarily involve a violation of the Cooperative Principle.

This is certainly an attractive picture. But as presented it leaves a number of important questions unanswered: How are *saying* and *implicating* to be defined? How are implicatures calculated? What is the status of the Cooperative Principle and maxims? What happens when a speaker cannot simultaneously observe all of the maxims? It is important, I think, to see how Grice attempted to face such questions and determine where there is more work to be done.

No one is likely to deny that in the example of the evaluation of Mr *X* there is an intuitive and obvious distinction to be made between what *U* said and what *U* conversationally implicated. But in view of the sorts of example that really bother Grice—'*X* looks ϕ to *A*', 'the *F* is *G*', '*p* or *q*', 'if *p* then *q*', etc.—he could not rest with an intuitive distinction. The example concerning the evaluation of Mr *X* is clear-cut, obvious, and uncontentious. And herein lies the problem. The examples of purported conversational implicature that most interest Grice are philosophically important ones with respect to which many philosophers have not felt the need to invoke such a distinction. This might be because it is not at all obvious that there is such a distinction to be made in the cases in question (or if there is, how relevant it is), or because adherence to some form of the "meaning is use" dogma has blinded certain philosophers to the possibility of such a distinction. So Grice ultimately needs *analyses* of "what is said" and "what is conversationally implicated" in order to get philosophical mileage out of these notions.

---

20 On this matter, see (e.g.) Wilson and Sperber (1981) and Sperber and Wilson (1986).

Grice hopes to analyse the notion of saying in terms of utterers' intentions. This proposal will be examined in section 5 after I have discussed Grice's Theory of Meaning. Right now, I want to look at what I think we should take to be Grice's attempt to define conversational implicature in terms of an, as yet, undefined notion of saying. The first steps come in the following passage:

> A man who, by (in, when) saying (or making as if to say) that *p* has implicated that *q*, may be said to have conversationally 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, or thinks that, *q* is required in order to make his saying or making as if to say *p* (or doing so in *those* terms) consistent with this presumption; and (3) the speaker thinks (and would expect the hearer to think that the speaker thinks) that it is within the competence of the hearer to work out, or grasp intuitively, that the supposition mentioned in (2) is required (pp. 30–31).

We appear to have here a set of *necessary* conditions. The conditions are not *sufficient* because conventional implicatures are not excluded. That this is Grice's view seems to be borne out a few lines later:

> The presence of a conversational implicature must be capable of being worked out; for even if it can in fact be intuitively grasped, unless the intuition is replaceable by an argument, the implicature (if present at all) will not count as a conversational implicature; it will be a conventional implicature (p. 31).[21]

In "Presupposition and Conversational Implicature" Grice stresses the point about calculability in no uncertain manner:

> . . . the final test for the presence of a conversational implicature [has] to be, as far as I [can] see, a derivation of it. One has to produce an account of how it could have arisen and why it is there. And I am very much opposed to any kind of sloppy use of this philosophical tool, in which one does not fulfil this condition (1981, p. 187).[22]

Returning to "Logic and Conversation," whenever there is a conversational implicature, one should be able to reason somewhat as follows (p. 31): (i) *U* has said that *p*; (ii) there is no reason to suppose that *U* is not observing the Cooperative Principle and maxims; (iii) *U* could not be doing this unless he thought that *q*; (iv) *U* knows (and knows that I know that *U* knows) that I can see that *U* thinks the supposition that *U* thinks that *q* is required; (v) *U* has done nothing to stop me thinking that *q*; (vi) *U* intends me to think, or is at least willing to allow me to think, that *q*; (vii) and so, *U* has implicated that *q*. In each

---

21 My interpretation of the text here differs from the one proposed by Grandy (1989). At pp. 518–519, Grandy suggests that the conditions contained in the first passage rule out conventional implicatures and that the second passage imposes an *in principle* requirement on conversational implicatures: "In other words, it suffices if the hearer can intuitively grasp the implicature so long as we conversational theoreticians can supply the rigorous argument" (p. 519).

22 Unfortunately, this passage is not reproduced in *Studies*. Evidently Grice felt that the discussion of conversational implicature in that paper was rendered otiose by the discussion in "Logic and Conversation." This was, I think, an error of judgment: the discussion in "Presupposition and Conversational Implicature" contains not only the above injunction but also some insightful comments on the type of generalized conversational implicature that attaches to uses of 'and'. For discussion, see section 3 of the present article.

of the cases Grice considers, it does seem to be possible to justify the existence of the implicature in question in this sort of way. But notice that *q* is simply introduced without explanation in step (iii), so Grice has certainly not stated any sort of method or procedure for calculating the content of conversational implicatures.[23] And to this extent, it is not entirely clear that Grice himself managed to avoid the kind of "sloppy use" that he warned against. On Grice's own terms, then, a good deal of work needs to be done on the calculation of particular implicatures if his evident insights are to form the basis of a finally acceptable theory.

A necessary condition on conversational implicatures that is intimately connected to condition (3) is that they are *intended*. This follows, if not from condition (3), at least from the fact that (a) what *U* implicates is part of what *U* means, and (b) what *U* means is determined by *U*'s communicative intentions. A hearer may think that, by saying that *p*, *U* has conversationally implicated that *q* (*A* may even have reasoned explicitly in the manner of (i)–(vii) above). But if *U* did not intend the implication in question it will not count as a conversational implicature. This point has, I think, been missed, or at least insufficiently appreciated, in much of the literature. Grice himself was explicit about it as far back as "The Causal Theory of Perception" at p. 130 of the 1961 version.

At this point, we have, I think, four conditions that are necessary but not sufficient for classifying an implication as a conversational implicature. Entailments do not seem to have been excluded. In order that we may stay focused on the relation between the speaker and certain propositions, let us make a harmless addition to Grice's terminology. If the proposition that *p* entails the proposition that *q*,[24] then if *U* is a competent speaker who says that *p, U* thereby says* that *q*. So if *U* is a perfectly competent English speaker who has sincerely uttered the sentence "John is a bachelor," not only has *U* said (and said*) that John is a bachelor, he has also said* that John is unmarried. Intuitively, it seems desirable that no proposition be both an entailment and a conversational implicature of the same utterance. But it is not obvious that the conditions laid down thus far on conversational implicature actually rule out entailments. Furthermore, Grice cannot just impose a further condition to the definition to the effect that no entailment is a conversational implicature. Recall that one of Grice's avowed aims is to ward off certain ordinary language arguments by invoking a sharp distinction between what we are now calling conversational implicature and entailment; so it is not good enough for him to use the notion of an entailment in a definition of conversational implicature.

A fifth condition Grice imposes on conversational implicatures seems to help here. Unlike an entailment, a conversational implicature is supposed to be *cancelable* either explicitly or contextually, without contradiction. If *U* says* that *p*, and *p* entails *q*, then *U*

---

23 On this matter, see (e.g.) Harnish (1976), Hugly and Sayward (1979), Sperber and Wilson (1986), and Wilson and Sperber (1981).

24 For simplicity, assume the standard modal notion of entailment. It should be noted, however, that Grice himself wanted to provide a definition of "*X* entails *Y*" using the central notions from his Theory of Meaning.

cannot go on to say* that not-*q* without contradiction. For example, *U* cannot say "John is a bachelor and John is married." But if *U* says* that *p*, and thereby conversationally implicates that *q, U* can go on to say* that not-*q* without contradiction. Consider again the case of *U*'s evaluation of Mr *X*. After uttering "Mr *X* has excellent handwriting and is always very punctual," *U* might (without irony) continue "Moreover, Mr *X*'s recent modal proof of the immortality of the soul is a brilliant and original contribution to philosophy." In the light of the first comment, this addition might be rather odd, but it would not result in *U* contradicting himself.[25]

Putting these five conditions together, we come, I think, about as close as we can with Grice's machinery to a set of necessary and sufficient conditions on conversational implicature.[26]

For Grice, the principles involved in an account of conversational implicature are to be grounded in a philosophical psychology that explicates the purportedly hierarchical relationships that hold between the various types of psychological states we ascribe to creatures that can reason and form complex intentions. The beginnings of this line of thought can be traced at least to the end of his 1957 paper "Meaning." Says Grice:

> [I]n cases where there is doubt, say, about which of two or more things an utterer intends to convey, we tend to refer to the context (linguistic or otherwise) of the utterance and ask which of the alternatives would be relevant to other things he is saying or doing, or which intention in a particular situation would fit in with some purpose he obviously has (e.g. a man who calls for a "pump" at a fire would not want a bicycle pump). Nonlinguistic parallels are obvious: context is a criterion in settling the question of why a man who has just put a cigarette in his mouth has put his hand in his pocket; relevance to an obvious end is a criterion in settling why a man is running away from a bull (p. 222).

This passage is of philosophical and historical interest for two reasons. First, although it predates Grice's publications on implicature by several years, it contains the seeds of the view that the Cooperative Principle and conversational maxims (in particular the maxim enjoining relevance) are to play a central role not just in an account of possible divergences between what *U* said and what *U* meant, but also in an account of the

---

25 In addition to distinguishing conversational implicatures from entailments, the cancelability test is also supposed to distinguish conversational from conventional implicatures. Although it will not lead to contradiction, attempting to cancel a conventional implicature will result in a genuinely linguistic transgression of some sort. This is precisely because there is a distinct semantic component to conventional implicatures.

26 For further discussion of the problems involved in defining conversational implicature, see (e.g.) Harnish (1976), Hugly and Sayward (1979), Kempson (1975), Sadock (1978), Sperber and Wilson (1986), Walker (1975), and Wilson and Sperber (1981).

Grice does mention a further feature of many conversational implicatures that is not shared by conventional implicatures. Suppose that by uttering a sentence *S, U* says that *p* and thereby conversationally implicates that *q*. The implicature may well exhibit a high degree of *nondetachability* in the sense that *U* could not have said that *p* by uttering another sentence (or form of words) *S'* and at the same time failed to have conversationally implicated that *q*. Of course, this diagnostic will fail to distinguish conversational implicatures from entailments. Moreover, as Grice himself points out, not only is nondetachability not sufficient, it is not even a necessary feature of conversational implicatures because those generated by violations of the maxims of manner typically *are* detachable.

resolution of ambiguities (whether lexical ("I want a pump") or structural ("visiting professors can be boring," "every boy danced with a girl"), the resolution of referential indeterminacy ("John is here"), and the resolution of anaphoric indeterminacy ("Harry told Bill that John had found his wallet").[27] Second, the passage contains the seeds of Grice's view that the use of language is one form of rational activity and that the principles at work in the interpretation of linguistic behavior are (or are intimately related to) those at work in interpreting intentional *non*linguistic behavior.

As far as the philosophy of language itself is concerned, two questions spring to mind immediately: (1) What are the relative rankings of the maxims in cases where it is hard (or impossible) for *U* to observe all of them (or all of them to the same degree), and why? (2) What is the basis for the assumption that, ". . . talkers will in general (ceteris paribus and in the absence of indications to the contrary) proceed in the manner that these principles prescribe" (p. 28)?

Turning first to the matter of the relative rankings, Grice is explicit about the position of at least one of the maxims of quality in any potential hierarchy. Consider the following example from Essay 3. *A* is planning an itinerary for his upcoming vacation to France. *A* wants to see his friend *C*, if so doing would not require too much additional traveling. *A* asks *B* "Where does *C* live?" *B* replies "Somewhere in the South of France." *B* knows that *A* would like more specific information but he is not in a position to be more specific. So *B* is faced with violating either a maxim of Quality or a maxim of Quantity. Quality wins out. As the following passages make clear, it is Grice's view that the maxims of Quality have a very special status within his overall theory:

> It is obvious that the observance of some of these maxims is a matter of less urgency than is the observance of others; a man who has expressed himself with undue prolixity would, in general, be open to milder comment than would a man who has said something he believes to be false. Indeed, it might be felt that the importance of at least the first maxim of Quality is such that it should not be included in a scheme of the kind I am constructing; other maxims come into operation only on the assumption that this maxim of Quality is satisfied (p. 27)

> The maxims do not seem to be coordinate. The maxim of Quality, enjoining the provision of contributions which are genuine rather than spurious (truthful rather than mendacious), does not seem to be just one among a number of recipes for producing contributions; it seems rather to spell out the difference between something's being, and (strictly speaking) failing to be, any kind of contribution at all. False information is not an inferior kind of information; it just is not information (p. 371).

These remarks suggest very strongly that the maxims of Quality (or at least the first maxim of Quality) should not be thought of as admitting of degree or varying across cultures. In some sense this is of course an empirical matter; but unlike the maxims of

---

[27] Furthermore, as Sperber and Wilson have stressed in their work on relevance, a hearer will not be in a position to progress from a specification of the meaning of a sentence to what is said even if all ambiguities are resolved and all referential and anaphoric links fixed because of ellipsis, vagueness, and so on. Since sentence meaning radically underdetermines what is said, the Cooperative Principle and conversational maxims are going to do more work than even Grice envisaged.

Quantity and Manner, it does not seem very plausible to suppose that there are thriving cultures in which standardly people do not behave (for particular reasons to be determined by anthropologists) as if they are observing the maxims of Quality.[28]

Turning now to the second question, Grice is not satisfied with the answer that "it is just a well-recognized empirical fact that people do behave in these ways; they learned to do so in childhood and have not lost the habit of doing so" (p. 29):

> I am, however, enough of a rationalist to want to find a basis that underlies these facts, undeniable though they may be; I would like to be able to think of the standard type of conversational practice not merely as something that all or most do *in fact* follow but as something that it is *reasonable* for us to follow, that we *should not* abandon (p. 29).
>
> Our talk exchanges do not normally consist of a succession of disconnected remarks, and would not be rational if they did. They are characteristically, to some degree at least, cooperative efforts; and each participant recognizes in them, to some extent, a common purpose or set of purposes, or at least a mutually accepted direction (p. 26).
>
> . . . one of my avowed aims is to see talking as a special case or variety of purposive, indeed rational, behavior (p. 28).

Grice briefly entertains the idea that since much human interaction is in the service of common immediate aims (usually with divergent longer term aims), some sort of "quasi-contractual" basis to the Cooperative Principle and maxims might be sustained. But he quickly abandons this line of thought on the grounds that (a) quarreling and letter-writing would not seem to be adequately accounted for, and (b) "the talker who is irrelevant or obscure has primarily let down not his audience but himself" (p. 29). The latter point leads directly into Grice's own favored view that "the use of language is one among a range of forms of rational activity" (p. 341):

> I would like to be able to show that observance of the Cooperative Principle and maxims is reasonable (rational) along the following lines: that anyone who cares about the goals that are central to conversation/communication (such as giving and receiving information, influencing and being influenced by others) must be expected to have an interest, given suitable circumstances, in participation in talk exchanges that will be profitable only on the assumption that they are conducted in general accordance with the Cooperative Principle and maxims. Whether any such conclusion can be reached, I am uncertain; in any case, I am fairly sure that I cannot reach it until I am a good deal clearer about the nature of relevance and of the circumstances in which it is required (pp. 29–30).

Some of the first steps are taken in "Meaning Revisited" (Essay 18), in more detail in "Method in Philosophical Psychology" (not included in *Studies*) and in, as yet, unpublished work in ethics and philosophical psychology. On Grice's view, value predicates such 'proper', 'correct', 'optimal', and 'relevant' cannot be kept out of an account of rational activity because a rational creature is essentially a creature that *evaluates*. Whether a value-oriented approach to the interpretation of intentional behavior can be developed in a fruitful way remains to be seen. But it is quite certain that as

---

[28] The question of the extent to which the observance of any of the maxims should be seen as determined by cultural factors is taken up by Keenan (1976), Gazdar (1979), and Wilson and Sperber (1981).

Grice's work on ethics and philosophical psychology becomes more widely available, there will be a resurgence of interest in the matter of the precise location of the Theory of Conversation within a larger scheme.[29]

3. The Logic of Natural Language

A central task of semantics is to provide a systematic characterization of intuitions concerning truth, falsity, entailment, contradiction, and so on. In the light of strong theoretical considerations, an initial judgment of, say, entailment might be rejected on the grounds that the perceived implication is an implicature rather than an entailment.[30] Thus far, we have considered only examples of what Grice calls "particularized" conversational implicature, examples in which there is no temptation to say that the relevant implication is an entailment (or a "presupposition"). Of considerably more philosophical interest are "generalized" conversational implicatures, the presence and general form of which seem to depend very little upon the particular contextual details. Examples discussed by Grice in *Studies* include those attaching to utterances of sentences containing intentional expressions like 'look', 'feel', and 'try', and "logical" expressions such as 'and', 'or', 'if', 'every', 'a', and 'the'. Examining and expanding upon Grice's remarks on two of the latter group ('and' and 'the') will help to clarify Grice's views about the relationship between classical logic and the semantics of natural language.

Ordinary Language philosophers are not alone in claiming to detect divergences in meaning between "formal devices" such as '&', '∨', '⊃', '(∀*x*)', '(∃*x*)', and '(ι*x*)' and their natural language counterparts ('and', 'or', 'if . . . then', 'every', 'some', and 'the'). As Grice sees it (in Essay 2), those who see such divergences tend to belong to one of two camps, which he calls the "formalist" and "informalist" camps. The informalist position is essentially the one taken by Strawson (and others of the Ordinary Language movement) discussed in section 1. The formalist camp is dominated by positivists and others who view natural language as inadequate to the needs of the science and philosophy of an age of precision. A typical formalist recommends the construction of an "ideal" or "logically perfect" language such as the language of first-order quantification theory with identity (or some suitable extension thereof). Since the meanings of '&', '∨', '⊃', '(∀*x*)', '(∃*x*)', '(ι*x*)' and so on are perfectly clear, using an ideal language,

---

29 See also Stenius (1967) and Lewis (1969, 1975). It is not necessary, of course, to appeal to ethical or social considerations as providing the underpinnings of a Grice-inspired pragmatic theory. Sperber and Wilson, for example, appeal to what are supposed to amount to brute facts about human capacities to process information. Impressed by the fact that the maxims under Relation and Quality seem to be of much more importance to Grice than the maxims under Quantity and Manner, and taking to heart Grice's remarks about the need to find out more about the nature of relevance, they set out to formulate a Principle of Relevance to replace the Cooperative Principle and conversational maxims. Like Grice, they do not see their principle as operative only when it comes to the interpretation of utterances.

30 As Chomsky (1965) stresses, the syntactician is in a similar position with respect to intuitions of, e.g., well-formedness (grammaticality). Rawls (1971) points out that more or less the same considerations carry over to ethical intuitions.

philosophers can state propositions clearly, clarify the contents of philosophical claims, draw the limits of intelligible philosophical discourse, draw the deductive consequences of sets of statements, and generally determine how well various propositions sit with each other.

In Essays 2, 4, 15, and 17, Grice takes the position that the formalists and informalists are mistaken in their common assumption that the formal devices and their natural language counterparts diverge in meaning. Each side has paid "inadequate attention to the nature and importance of the conditions governing conversation" (p. 24). In short, both sides have taken mere pragmatic implications to be parts of the meanings of sentences of natural language containing "logical" expressions.

The case of 'and' is interesting as it highlights some important methodological considerations and possible refinements of Grice's proposals. Although it is plausible to suppose that 'and' (when it is used to conjoin sentences) functions semantically just like '&', there are certainly sentences in which it appears to function rather differently:

(1) Ann and Bill got married and Ann gave birth to twins

(2) Grice scowled and the student began shaking.

Someone who uttered (1) would typically be taken to imply that Ann and Bill got married *before* Ann gave birth to twins. And someone who uttered (2) would typically be taken to imply that Grice's scowling contributed in some way to the student's shaking. Thus one might be led to the view that 'and' is not always understood as '&', that it is (at least) three ways ambiguous between truth-functional, temporal, and causal readings.

But in view of the entailment relationships that ought to obtain between sentences differing only in the exchange of causal, temporal, and logical 'and's, the postulation of semantically distinct readings looks extravagant. Grice is sensitive to this point and suggests it is good methodological practice to subscribe to "Modified Occam's Razor": s*enses are not to be multiplied beyond necessity* (p. 47). Given the viability of the distinction between what is said and what is meant, if a pragmatic explanation is available of why a particular expression appears to diverge in meaning in different linguistic environments (or in different conversational settings) then *ceteris paribus* the pragmatic explanation is preferable to the postulation of a semantic ambiguity. Grice's idea is that the implication of temporal sequence attaching to an utterance of (1) can be explained in terms of the fact that each of the conjuncts describes an event (rather than a state) and the presumption that *U* is observing the submaxim of Manner enjoining orderly deliveries. It seems to be Grice's view, then, that by uttering (1) *U* will conversationally implicate (rather than say) that Ann and Bill got married before Ann gave birth to twins (if this is correct then what is conversationally implicated would appear to entail what is said in this case). Similarly, the implication of causal connection attaching to an utterance of (2) is apparently to be explained in terms of the presumption that the speaker is being

relevant. Before looking at problems for this proposal, I want first to get clear about its strengths.

Conversational explanations are preferable to the postulation of semantic ambiguities on grounds of theoretical economy and generality. A conversational explanation is free in the sense that the mechanisms that are appealed to are already in place and independently motivated. As Grice points out, the generality lost by positing several readings of 'and' is quite considerable.[31] First, implications of (e.g.) temporal priority and causal connection attach to uses of the counterparts of 'and' across unrelated languages. Of course, one might posit corresponding ambiguities in such languages; but the phenomenon is more readily explained as the product of general pragmatic considerations. Second, it is not unreasonable to suspect that implications of the same sorts would arise even for speakers of a language containing an explicitly truth-functional connective '&'. Third, the same implications that attach to a particular utterance of '*p* and *q*' (or '*p* & *q*') would attach to an utterance of the two sentence sequence "p. q' not containing an explicit device of conjunction. On *methodological* grounds, then, the pragmatic account of the temporal and causal implications in (1) and (2) is preferable to accounts that appeal crucially to semantic ambiguity.[32]

It should be stressed that, unlike some who have appealed to the notion of implicature, Grice himself was very much opposed to the idea of postulating idiosyncratic *pragmatic rules* with which to derive certain standard cases of generalized conversational implicature. To posit such rules is to abandon both the letter and the spirit of his theory. For Grice, the conversational implicatures that attach to particular utterances must be explicable in terms of the Cooperative Principle and maxims, construed as quite *general* antecedent assumptions about the rational nature of conversational practice (see section 2). It is important not to be misled by Grice's intuitive distinction between particularized and generalized implicatures; instances of the latter must still satisfy the calculability requirement. To call an implicature "generalized" is just to acknowledge the fact that the presence of the implicature is relatively independent of the details of the particular conversational context, a fact that itself is to be explained by the cooperative nature of talk exchanges.

---

31 Unfortunately, Grice's clearest statement is contained in that section of "Presupposition and Conversational Implicature" not reproduced in *Studies*.

32 Of course, there may well be uses of the English word 'and' that resist Gricean analysis—as in (e.g.) 'Insult me again and I'll divorce you'—but all I am trying to illustrate is that where semantic and pragmatic accounts handle *the same range of data*, the pragmatic account is preferable.

It seems unlikely that all occurrences of 'and' that conjoin (e.g.) noun phrases can be analysed in terms of logical conjunction. While a sentence like

(i) Grice and Strawson taught at Oxford

might be analysable in terms of the conjunction of (ii) and (iii),

(ii) Grice taught at Oxford

(iii) Strawson taught at Oxford

such a proposal is quite unsuitable for

(iv) Grice and Strawson wrote "In Defence of a Dogma."

In "Indicative Conditionals" (Essay 4), Grice defends the view that the semantics of 'if *p* then *q*' are given by '$p \supset q$' when *p* and *q* are both indicative sentences. Rather than discuss Grice's ingenuity with 'if', I want to look at what happens when 'if' and 'and' interact.[33] Let *A* and *B* be children, and let *C* be a parent. Now consider the following sentences:

(3) If *B* yells and *A* hits *B*, then C will punish *A* and *B*

(4) If *A* hits *B* and *B* yells, C will punish *A* and *B*

It is arguable that (3) and (4) can differ in truth value. E.g., if *C* thinks that *A* should not be punished for a yelling induced by being hit, couldn't (4) be false even if (3) were true? If so, there would appear to be a problem for Grice. If something pertaining to the order of the proceedings described in the antecedents of (3) and (4) is only conversationally implicated, how is it possible for (3) and (4) to diverge in truth value? It looks as though Grice will have to say that a conversational implicature of the antecedent of a conditional somehow gets into the truth conditions of the conditional as a whole. And the unacceptability of this might suggest that Grice will have to concede that at least some occurrences of 'and' have a genuinely temporal (or causal) component.

The general form of this problem has been discussed at length by Grice and others without a great deal of progress. However, a Gricean distinction that Grice himself rarely needs to appeal to may lead to a plausible solution to this and related problems.[34] In his Theory of Meaning, Grice distinguishes not only between what one *means* by uttering a sentence ϕ and what one *says* by uttering ϕ, but also between what ϕ itself means and what one says by uttering ϕ (Essays 5 and 6). Is it not possible that the latter distinction can be exploited in some way to modify Grice's position without conceding to the ambiguity theorist?

I think it is possible. One important difference between natural languages and regular first-order languages is that the former contain indexical components such as 'I', 'you', 'here', and 'now'. So at the very least we must distinguish between the meaning of the sentence 'You look bored' and what I say by uttering this sentence on a given occasion.[35] At the subsentential level, this corresponds to the fact that we must distinguish between the meaning of the word 'you' and the referent of a particular utterance of 'you'. What I say by uttering 'You look bored' depends on the referent of this particular utterance of 'you'; and this is what makes it possible to say different things by distinct utterances of this same sentence. Might it not be the case that something similar is going on with 'and' (and many other expressions)? The Gricean might maintain that the meaning of '*p* and *q*'

---

33 On Grice on conditionals, see Adams (1992), Cohen (1971), Harnish (1976), Jackson (1988), Mackie (1973), Posner (1985), Strawson (1986), and Walker (1975).

34 To the best of my knowledge, the general form of this type of solution to the problem was first proposed by Carston (1988), who locates her own version within Sperber and Wilson's Relevance Theory.

35 This fact causes substantial technical problems for Grice's attempts to characterize what is said in terms of a coincidence of utterer's meaning and sentence meaning. See section 6.

itself falls short of determining what I say by uttering '*p* and *q*' on a given occasion (even when '*p* and *q*' contains none of the usual indexical expressions). On such an account, the original problem posed for Grice was badly stated. We should not have said (sloppily) that (3) and (4) may differ in truth value; we should have said that what I say by uttering (3) may be true even though what I would have said in the same context by uttering (4) is false, and that this follows from the fact that what I say by uttering the antecedent of (3) can be true even though what would have said by uttering the antecedent of (4) in the same context is false. None of this involves positing a semantical ambiguity in 'and'. It is truth-conditional underspecification rather than semantical ambiguity that is involved, as in so many other cases.[36]

A second challenge to classical logic semantics that concerns Grice centers around the interpretation of definite descriptions. Since the appearance of Russell's "On Denoting" in 1905, it has been clear that descriptions are of considerable philosophical importance. According to Russell, the logical and ontological problems that result from treating descriptions as referring expressions disappear once one sees that phrases of the form 'the *F*' (canonical descriptions) belong to the same semantical category ("denoting phrases") as structurally identical phrases of the form 'every *F*', 'an *F*', 'no *F*', etc. Descriptions are *quantificational* rather than referential. More precisely, the logical form of a sentence of the form "the *F* is *G*' is given by the quantificational formula

(5) $(\exists x)((\forall y)(Fy \equiv y{=}x) \,\&\, Gx)$.

In Grice's terminology, on this account someone who asserts a sentence of the form 'the *F* is *G*', says that there is exactly one *F* and every *F* is *G*. Thus it is as wrong to inquire into the *referent* of a noun phrase 'the *F*' as it is to inquire into the referent of a noun phrase 'every *F*' or 'no *F*'. A description is a (complex) quantified expression and the proposition expressed is general rather than singular.[37]

The Theory of Descriptions undoubtedly constitutes one of the major achievements of analytic philosophy; but it has not been without its critics. For example, Strawson felt compelled to challenge Russell on the grounds that the theory does not do justice to ordinary usage. According to Strawson, speakers use descriptions to *refer*, not to quantify, and hence Russell's theory is (or so Strawson felt at the time) open to a number of objections. According to Grice, a number of Strawsonian objections can be disposed of by distinguishing, as we must, between sentence meaning, what is said, and what is meant. Grice presented the bulk of his defence of Russell and his attack on the notion of "presupposition" in his "Lectures on Language and Reality" at Urbana in 1970. To date, only Lecture IV ("Presupposition and Conversational Implicature") has been published, and it appears (with some tampering) as Essay 17 of *Studies*. Here Grice explores whether objections involving negation, scope, nonindicatives, and the sentence/statement

36 See Sperber and Wilson (1986) and Carston (1988).
37 For extended discussion, see Neale (1990) ch 2.

distinction might be met within his framework, and whether "the kind of linguistic phenomena that prompted the resort to the theory of presupposition as a special sort of logical relation (with all the ramifications which that idea would involve) could be dealt with in some other way" (p. 269).

I want briefly to discuss three things Grice has to say about Russell's theory. Recast in Grice's terminology, one of Strawson's main complaints against Russell is that his theory conflates the meaning of a sentence 'the *F* is *G*' and what *U* says by uttering this sentence (and similarly the subsentential counterparts of these notions) and so cannot explain the fact that *U* may say different things on different occasions by uttering the same sentence. In my view, Grice is quite right to claim that Strawson can get no mileage out of Russell's failure to separate sentence meaning and what is said in his discussions of descriptions. For it is clear upon reflection that Russell's concern is with what is said (the proposition expressed) rather than sentence meaning. If Russell were being more precise, he would not say that the *sentence* 'the *F* is *G*' is equivalent to the *sentence* 'there is exactly one *F* and every *F* is *G*'; rather, he would say that what *U* says by uttering 'the *F* is *G*' on a particular occasion is that there is exactly one *F* and every *F* is *G* (occurrences of '*F*' in the foregoing may, of course, be elliptical). The fact that a description (or any other quantified noun phrase) may contain an indexical component ('the *present* king of France', 'every man *here*', etc.) does not present a problem: all this means is that there are some descriptions that are subject to the Theory of Descriptions *and* a theory of indexicality. As Grice observes, this is something that Russell seems to have been aware of back in "On Denoting": one of Russell's examples of a definite description is 'my son'. Grice is surely right, then, that although we need a sharp distinction between sentence meaning and what is said (and their subsentential counterparts), Strawson's appeal to this distinction when challenging Russell is empty:

> . . . Russell would have been prepared to say that one and the same denoting phrase might, on the face of it, have one denotation when used by one speaker, and another when used by another speaker, and perhaps none when used by a third speaker. Russell did not regard the denotation of a phrase as invariant between occasions of the use of the phrase, which may make one think that he did not make the mistake Strawson attributed to him (1970, p. 39).

By allowing scope permutations involving descriptions and negation, Russell was able to capture the fact that "The king of France is not bald" might be used to say something true even if there is no king of France. On his account, the sentence is ambiguous between (6) and (7):

(6) $(\exists x)((\forall y)(king\ y \equiv y{=}x)\ \&\ \neg bald\ x)$

(7) $\neg(\exists x)((\forall y)(king\ y \equiv y{=}x)\ \&\ bald\ x)$.

If the description has large scope, as in (6), then the sentence entails the existence of a unique King of France; by contrast, if the description has small scope, as in (7), then the truth of the sentence is perfectly consistent with there being no king of France. One

question here is whether or not this alleged scope permutation captures a genuine semantical ambiguity. As Grice points out, if an ambiguity is to be posited, an interesting observation needs to be explained

> . . . without waiting for disambiguation, people understand an utterance of *the king of France is not bald* as implying (in some fashion) the unique existence of a king of France (p. 272)

In support of Russell, Grice suggests that this observation is explicable on the assumption that when 'the king of France is not bald' is read as (7) the utterance will typically carry a *conversational implicature* to the effect that there is a unique king of France (when read as (6) there is, of course, an *entailment* to that effect). Grice goes through quite a rigmarole in order to explain how the implicature is generated, but in the light of developments in generalized quantifier theory, theoretical syntax, and conditionals, it is arguable that the results Grice wants can be obtained much more economically once one completely frees oneself (as Grice perhaps does not) from the idea that Russell is, in some ways, clinging to the view that descriptions are singular terms.[38]

In fact, Grice disposes very neatly of the view that descriptions are ambiguous between Russellian and referential readings. In "Vacuous Names" (which is unfortunately not included in *Studies*) Grice contrasts the following examples:

> (1) A group of men is discussing the situation arising from the death of a business acquaintance, of whose private life they know nothing, except that (as they think) he lived extravagantly, with a household staff that included a butler. One of them says "Well, Jones' butler will be seeking a new position."
>
> (2) Earlier, another group has just attended a party at Jones' house, at which their hats and coats were looked after by a dignified individual in dark clothes with a wing-collar, a portly man with protruding ears, whom they heard Jones addressing as "Old Boy," and who at one point was discussing with an old lady the cultivation of vegetable marrows. One of the group says "Jones' butler got the hats and coats mixed up" (p. 141).

Grice then highlights two important features of case (2). First, only in case (2) has some particular individual been "'described as', 'referred to as', or 'called', Jones' butler by the speaker" (*ibid*.). Second, in case (2), someone who knew that Jones had no butler and who knew that the man with the protruding ears, etc., was actually Jones' gardener

---

38 In both "Vacuous Names" and in "Presupposition and Conversational Implicature," Grice notes that when it comes to the semantics of natural language it is consistent with Russell's semantics to treat a description 'the *F'* as a restricted quantifier '[ιxFx]' that combines with a formula ϕ to form a formula '[$\iota xFx]\phi$' (even in primitive notation). However, for reasons that are not convincing Grice chooses to stay with Russell's own notation in which a description "the *F*' is treated, as far as syntax is concerned, as a singular term '(ιx)(Fx)' that combines with a predicate *G* to form a formula 'G(ιx)(Fx)'. Russell himself constantly reminds us that 'G(ιx)(Fx)' is only an abbreviation for a longer formula (an abbreviation that helps him simplify his proofs and his formulae), that descriptions are not really singular terms at all, that only under certain conditions and in certain specifiable environments may we proceed *as if* descriptions were singular terms, that care must be taken because of matters of scope, and so on. Grice notes that '$\neg G(\iota x)(Fx)$' "will be ambiguous [unless one introduces a disambiguating scope convention]" (p. 272), but his typographical joke seems to have been missed by the editors (who have used parentheses rather than the square brackets that appeared in the 1981 version of the paper).

"would also be in a position to claim that the speaker had *mis*described that individual as Jones' butler" (p. 142).

Whereas many philosophers used pairs of examples with these general features to motivate the view that descriptions are ambiguous between Russellian and referential readings,[39] Grice does not think there is a problem for Russell here: what *U* says is given by the Russellian expansion even if the description is used referentially (in an "identificatory way" as Grice puts it) as in case (2) above. In a referential case, *U* intends to communicate information about some particular individual; but all this means is that what *U* means diverges from what *U* says. This very natural move (which has subsequently received strong support from a variety of other sources[40]) provides a perfectly satisfactory account of what is going on when *U* uses a description that does not fit its target. If Jones's butler did not get the hats and coats mixed up, but Jones's gardener did, then when *U* uttered the sentence "Jones' butler got the hats and coats mixed up" what *U* said was false, but part of what *U* meant was true. Now it is important to see, as Grice does not, that when a description is used referentially there will *always* be a mismatch between what *U* says and what *U* means (even where the description uniquely fits the individual the speaker intends to communicate information about) because what is said is, on Russell's account, analysable as a general proposition, whereas what is meant will always include a singular proposition.[41]

Again, methodological considerations strongly favor the Gricean account of referential usage over an account that posits a semantic ambiguity.[42] (i) If we were taught explicitly Russellian truth conditions, referential usage would still occur; (ii) exactly parallel phenomena occur with indefinite descriptions and other quantified noun phrases; (iii) Modified Occam's Razor enjoins us to opt for the simpler of two theories, other things being equal. Subsequently, far more detailed defenses of Russell along Gricean lines have been proposed by other philosophers, but the debts these works owe to Grice are considerable. More generally, a debt is owed to Grice for rejuvenating the position that classical logic is a remarkably useful tool as far as the semantics of natural language is concerned.

4. Meaning.

Many philosophers and linguists appeal freely to such notions as *what is said* (*the statement made*/*the proposition expressed*) and *what is implicated* (*what is pragmatically imparted*/*what is conveyed indirectly*). Grice himself appeals to these notions time and again; but in Essays 5, 6, 14, and 18 he attempts to *analyse* or *explicate* them in terms of (for him) more basic notions such as intention, belief, desire, and recognition.

---

39 E.g., Donnellan (1966).
40 See (e.g.) Kripke (1977), Searle (1979), Neale (1990).
41 For detailed discussion, see Neale (1990) ch 3.
42 On this matter, see particularly Kripke (1977).

The analysis of locutions of the forms '*X* did *Y* intentionally', '*X* caused *Y*', '*X* is true', '*X* entails *Y*', '*X* is red', and so on, has been regarded by many philosophers as a central task of philosophy. There are a number of different views about the exact aims and proper methods of analysis; Grice's conception appears to have a reductive and explicative flavor in that it appears to be his view that locutions of the forms 'by uttering *X*, *U* meant that *p*', '*X* means "*p*"', and 'by uttering *X*, *U* said that *p*' can be wholly explicated without appealing to semantical concepts.[43]

In his 1957 paper "Meaning," Grice seeks to explain what it is for someone or something to mean something (but not in a sense of 'mean' ("natural meaning") found in sentences such as 'those spots mean measles', that buzz means someone is at the door', or 'that groan means Bill is in pain'.[44]). He starts out with what *people* mean rather than with what this or that expression, sign, or action means. The plan, executed in more detail in the James Lectures, is to analyse utterer's meaning in terms of complex audience-directed intentions on the part of the utterer, and to analyse utterance-type meaning (e.g., sentence meaning and word meaning) in terms of utterer's meaning.

It is important for a proper understanding of this project to keep in mind the following: although Grice aims to neutralize many ordinary language maneuvers with his saying/implicating distinction, one of the driving forces behind his work is still the idea that the meaning of an expression is a function of what its users do with it. The following passage from "Meaning Revisited" will help to frame the discussion of the next three sections:

> [T]o say what a word means in a language is to say what it is in general optimal for speakers of that language to do with that word, or what use they are to make of it; what particular intentions on particular occasions it is proper for them to have. Of course, there is no suggestion that they *always* have to have those intentions: it would merely be optimal, *ceteris paribus*, for them to have them (p. 299).

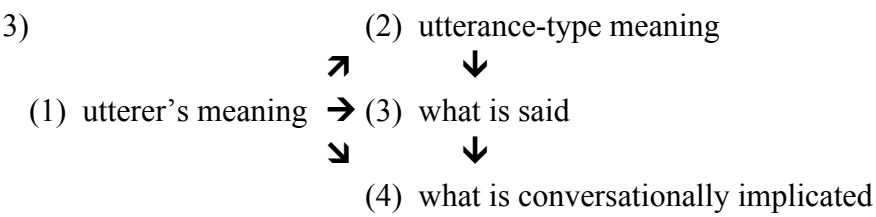
Abstracting away from certain details that I will get to later, the direction of analysis for Grice is as follows,

---

43 It could be argued that one of the lessons of twentieth-century philosophy is that watertight reductive analysis is, for the most part, impossible. To argue this would not be to commit oneself to the denial of the existence of a viable analytic-synthetic distinction. For some of Grice's thoughts on this matter, see the 1956 paper "In Defence of a Dogma," written with Peter Strawson (Essay 13 of *Studies*) and Grice (1986).

44 Although he separates "natural" and "nonnatural" meaning, the possibility of viewing nonnatural meaning as a "descendant" of natural meaning appeals to Grice. In the final paragraph of "Utterer's Meaning and Intentions" he suggests that a simplified treatment of utterer's meaning might emerge from investigating the relation between natural and nonnatural meaning (p. 116). An attempt to spell out the relation is contained in "Meaning Revisited" (Essay 18) and important auxiliary notions are discussed in "Method in Philosophical Psychology."

(Fig. 3)



where "α → β" is understood as "α (or its analysis) plays a role in the analysis of β (but not vice versa)."[45] As shorthand, we might say that a concept α is "logically prior" to a concept β iff (i) the concept α plays a role in the analysis of β, and (ii) the concept β does not play a role in the analysis of α.[46] The idea, then, is to begin by providing an analysis of (1) utterer's meaning, and then to use this analysis in an analysis of (2) utterance-type meaning. (3) Saying is then to be defined in terms of a near coincidence of utterer's meaning and utterance-type meaning (for certain utterance-types); and finally (4) conversational implicature is to be defined in terms of saying and utterer's meaning in the manner proposed in section 2.

Although Grice does not address this point directly, it is clear that the task of explicating the locution 'by uttering *x*, *U* said that *p*' takes on some urgency for him because the saying/implicating distinction is so central to his attempts to counter ordinary language arguments of the sort we examined earlier. A direct *analysis* of saying appears out of the question because Grice openly declares that he is using 'say' in "a certain favored, and maybe in some degree artificial, sense" (p. 118), and this precludes systematic appeal to intuitions about ordinary usage (". . . a philosopher who uses a technical term should recognize that it is a technical term and therefore stands in need of a special explanation" (p. 173)). By contrast, when it comes to pronouncing on the truth of instances of 'by uttering *x*, *U meant* that *p*', clearly Grice believes he can help himself to such intuitions, many of them quite subtle. Strictly speaking, then, saying is to be *defined* rather than analysed.

It is in the service of these goals and in the spirit of explication through analysis that I think we ought to approach Grice's Theory of Meaning. To some philosophers and linguists, Grice's program seems to constitute something of a snub to serious compositional semantics. The idea that sentence meaning is to be analysed in terms of utterer's meaning has been felt to conflict with (i) the fact that knowing the meaning of a sentence is typically a necessary step in working out what *U* meant by uttering that sentence, i.e. for recovering *U*'s communicative intentions, and (ii) the fact that the meaning of a sentence is determined, at least in part, by the meanings of its parts (i.e. words and phrases) and the way the parts are put together (syntax). In my view, both of these charges are based on misunderstandings of Grice's project, and I shall attempt to

---

45 For the purposes of Fig. 3, I have suppressed Grice's distinctions between "timeless" and "applied timeless" meaning, and between "idiolect-meaning" and "language-meaning." These notions will emerge later in the discussion.

46 See, e.g., Schiffer (1972).

bring together various parts of *Studies* in an attempt to show why. First, I need to say something about the main strengths and weaknesses of the sort of analysis of utterer's meaning that Grice explores (in Essays 5, 6, and 14) and tie up a number of loose ends.

5. Utterer's Meaning

In "Meaning," Grice suggests that '*U* meant something by uttering *x*' is (roughly) equivalent to ;*U* intended the utterance of *x* to produce some response in an audience by means of the recognition of this intention' (p. 220).[47] By the time of the James Lectures, any suggestion of a self-referential intention in this formulation has disappeared.[48] Following a suggestion due to Strawson (1964), in "Utterer's Meaning and Intentions," Grice unpacks (or perhaps modifies) his original idea as follows:

(I) 'By uttering *x, U* meant something' is true iff for some audience *A*, *U* uttered *x* intending:

(1) *A* to produce some particular response *r*,
(2) *A* to recognize that *U* intends (1), and
(3) *A*'s recognition that *U* intends (1) to function, in part, as a reason for (1).

To provide a specification of *r*, says Grice, is to say *what U* meant. Where *x* is an "indicative" utterance, *r* is *A's believeing something*:[49]

(II) 'By uttering *x, U* meant that *p*' is true iff for some audience *A, U* uttered *x* intending:

(1) *A* to believe that *p*,
(2) and (3) as above

This type of complex intention Grice calls an "*M*-intention" (p. 105): by uttering *x, U* meant that *p* iff for some audience *A, U* uttered *x M*-intending *A* to believe that *p*.

I want to look at three general problems with (II), certain aspects of which are discussed by Grice in "Utterer's Meaning and Intentions."[50]

(i) *The first clause problem*. Grice provides a number of examples in which it would be correct to say that *U* means that *p* but incorrect to say that *U* intends *A* to believe that *p*

---

47 In "Meaning" Grice writes the analysandum as "*U* meant something by *x*." In the James Lectures he writes it as "*U* meant something by uttering *x*." As (e.g.) Ziff (1967) and Schiffer (1972) point out, it is not obvious that these notions coincide in all cases. Once the distinction is made clear, the later analysandum emerges as the relevant one as far as Grice's project is concerned, and to that extent I propose to view the earlier statement of the analysandum as an abbreviation of the later statement.

48 On this matter, see Harman (1974) and Avramides (1989).

49 For simplicity, I will focus on "indicative-type" utterances. For Grice's general strategy when it comes to other speech act types, see note 52. Nagel (1979) suggests that a similar structure is present in sex: "it involves a desire that one's partner be aroused by the recognition of one's desire that he or she be aroused" (p. 47).

50 See also Searle (1969), Schiffer (1972), Harman (1974), McDowell (1980), Blackburn (1984), and Récanati (1986). Schiffer's book contains a comprehensive and intricate collection of counterexamples and potential remedies.

(p. 105–109). Suppose *U* is answering an examination question and says "The Battle of Waterloo was fought in 1815." Here *U* meant that the Battle of Waterloo was fought in 1815; but *U* did not intend the examiner to think that The Battle of Waterloo was fought in 1815 (typically, *U* will be under the impression that the examiner already knows the answer). In response to this and related examples, Grice suggests that clause (1) of (II) be changed to (1_1):

(1_1) *A* to think that *U* thinks that *p*.

A distinction is then made between *exhibitive* utterances (utterances by which *U M*-intends to impart the belief that *U* has a certain propositional attitude) and *protreptic* utterances ("utterances by which *U M*-intends, *via* imparting a belief that [*U*] has a certain propositional attitude, to induce a corresponding attitude in the hearer" (p. 123)).

One worry about the suggested revision is that it does not comport well with the commonly held view that the primary purpose of communication is the transfer of information about the world: on the revised account, the primary purpose seems to be the transfer of information about one's mental states.[51] Another worry is that even if the proposed revision does constitute something of an improvement, it does not weaken the analysis in such a way as to let in cases of reminding (some cases of which bring up another problem, addressed below). Suppose *U* knows that *A* thinks that *p* but needs reminding. So *U* does something by which he means that *p*. Not only does it seem incorrect to say (as the original analysis would require) that *U* intends *A* to think that *p*—*U* knows that *A* already thinks that *p*—it also seems incorrect to say (as the modified analysis requires) that *U* intends *A* to think that *U* thinks that *p* (*U* may know that *A* already thinks that *U* thinks that *p*). What seems to be needed here, says Grice, is some notion of an *activated* belief:[52] (1) needs to be changed not to (1_1) but to something more like (1_2):

(1_2) *A* actively to believe that *U* thinks that *p*.

But there seems still to be a problem involving reminding. Suppose *A* has invited *B* over for dinner tonight at seven-thirty. *B* has agreed to come but *U* doubts *B* will show up and says as much to *A*. At seven o'clock, *U* and *A* are deep in philosophical conversation and *U*, realizing that *A* has lost track of time, says "*B* will be here in half an hour." This type of example suggests we are better off with something like (1_3), at least for some cases:

(1_3) *A* actively to believe that *p*.

So perhaps a disjunctive clause is going to be required in any finally acceptable analysis.[53]

---

51 McDowell (1980).

52 See also Schiffer (1972).

53 On Grice's account, an adequate account of utterer's meaning must also have application in cases involving at least two other "central" types of speech act, viz. "imperative-type" and "interrogative-

But perhaps the problem with the first clause of (II) runs deeper than this; perhaps the difficulties just touched upon are instances of a more general difficulty concerning the content of the intention (or M-intention) characteristic of communicative behavior. This seems to be the view of Searle (1969): to produce a piece of behavior by which one can be said to mean something is a matter of performing an *illocutionary* act; but on Grice's account it appears to be a matter of performing a *perlocutionary* act.[54] One way of putting Searle's general point is as follows: by paying too much attention to examples in which *U* intends to induce in *A* some propositional attitude or other, Grice has mistakenly taken a particular type of intention that does in fact accompany many utterances—the subintention specified in clause (1)—to be an essential ingredient of communicative behavior. But there are just too many cases of meaning involving linguistic (or otherwise conventional) utterances in which *U* does not seek to induce in an audience any propositional (or affective) attitude. Searle brings up three problems here. (i) It is not at all clear what attitude I M-intend to impart when making a promise by uttering a sentence of the form "I promise to ϕ." (ii) Sometimes I don't care whether I am believed or not; I just feel it is my duty to speak up. (iii) Only an egocentric author intends me to believe that *p* because he has said so.

These are genuine difficulties for Grice's analysis as it stands, and they suggest to me that the specification of the *type* of response mentioned in the first clause needs to be weakened to something like the following:

(1_4) *A* actively to entertain the belief/thought/proposition that *p*.

Of course, in many cases *U* also intends (or at least would like) *A* to go on to believe that *p*, but this fact would not enter into the analysis of utterer's meaning. A revision along these lines would not be so immediately susceptible to the charge that illocutionary and perlocutionary effects are run together.[55]

(ii) *The third clause problem*. There are several worries about clause (3) of (II); I shall address just the one that seems to me the most serious as far as Grice's overall project is

---

type" utterances. In Essay 6, Grice suggests that, having made the move from (1) to (1_1) or (1_2) for "indicative-type" utterances, we should "represent the *M*-intended effect of imperative-type utterances as being that [*U*] should *intend* to do something (with of course the ulterior intention on the part of [*U*] that [*A*] should go on to do the act in question)" (p. 123). The effect of this change is that ". . . the way is opened up to a simplified treatment of the *M*-intended effect, as being always the generation of some propositional attitude" (ibid.). Grice then introduces '$*_{\psi}$' as "a dummy, which represents a specific mood-indicator which corresponds to the propositional attitude ψ-ing (whichever that may be), as, for example, '-' corresponds to believing (thinking) and '!' corresponds to intending" (ibid.). This enables him to generalize the definition of utterer's meaning: "By uttering *x, U* meant that '$*_{\psi}p$' is true iff for some audience *A, U* uttered *x M*-intending *A* actively to entertain the belief that *U* ψ's that *p*. Such a generalization brings up a number of additional questions that I cannot discuss here.

54 See also Bach and Harnish (1979).

55 Searle's own account takes the intention characteristic of communicative behavior as an intention concerning "uptake," an intention to be understood as expressing such-and-such a proposition, an intention to be understood as performing such-and-such an illocutionary act (see also Bach and Harnish (1979)).

concerned. The original motivation for clause (2) is perfectly clear. It is not enough, Grice points out, for *U* to mean that *p*, that *U* utter *x* intending *A* to think that *p*. *U* might leave *B*'s handkerchief near the scene of the murder with the intention of getting the detective (actively) to entertain the thought that *B* is the murderer. But there is no temptation to say that by leaving the handkerchief, *U meant* that *B* is the murderer (p. 217). Hence clause (2), which requires *U* to intend *A* to recognize the intention specified in the first clause (however stated).

But what of clause (3)? Grice wants this in order to filter out cases in which some natural feature of the utterance in question makes it *completely obvious* that *p*. He is worried by cases like the following: (a) Herod presents Salome with the head of John the Baptist on a charger (p. 109, p. 218); (b) in response to an invitation to play squash, Bill displays his bandaged leg (p. 109). According to Grice, we do not want to say that Herod *meant* that John the Baptist was dead; nor do we want to say that Bill *meant* that his leg was bandaged (though we might want to say that he meant that he could not play squash, or even that he had a bad leg).

Along with several others, I am not at all sure about Grice's intuitions here.[56] He seems to be worried that in cases like (a) and (b) there is something approximating natural meaning that interferes with the idea of Herod and Bill nonnaturally meaning that John the Baptist is dead and that Bill has a bandaged leg, respectively. In view of the links Grice attempts to forge between natural and nonnatural meaning in "Meaning Revisited," it is not clear to me why the putative presence of natural meaning is supposed to be problematic, and so it is not clear to me why the third clause of (II) is needed. Grice himself brings up cases that seem to create a problem for the third clause (pp. 109–110).[57] Suppose the answer to a certain question is "on the tip of *A*'s tongue." *U* knows this; that is, *U* knows that *A* thinks that *p* but can't quite remember. So *U* reminds *A* that *p* by doing something by which he (*U*) means that *p*. In such a scenario, even if *U* has the intention specified in the first clause (however stated), it does not seem to be the case that *U* has the intention specified in the the third clause. It is noteworthy that the examples Grice uses to justify the third clause involve nonlinguistic utterances (the "John the Baptist" and "bandaged leg" cases). However, it is possible to construct cases involving properly linguistic utterances in which the fact that *p* is made just as obvious by the utterance as in Grice's nonlinguistic cases. Consider an utterance by me of (e.g.) 'I can speak in a squeaky voice' said in a squeaky voice;[58] or an utterance by me of 'I'm right here' yelled in the direction of someone known to be looking for me.[59] In neither of these cases is there a strong inclination to say that I did not *mean* what I said.

A serious problem seems to await Grice further down the road if he does not concede that the third clause is overly restrictive. Ultimately, Grice wants to define locutions of

56 On this matter, see Schiffer (1972), Récanati (1986), and Sperber and Wilson (1986).
57 See also Searle (1969) and Schiffer (1972).
58 This example is due to Neil Smith.
59 Schiffer (1972); Récanati (1986).

the form "by uttering *x*, *U* said that *p*'; but one of the conjuncts in his proposed definiens is "by uttering *x*, *U* meant that *p*' (pp. 87–88 and 120–121). So if he refuses to allow that (e.g.) I can mean that I can speak in a squeaky voice by uttering, in a squeaky voice, 'I can speak in a squeaky voice', Grice will be forced either to conclude that I have not *said* that I can speak in a squeaky voice, or else to abandon the idea of defining saying in terms of utterer's meaning (he cannot, of course, say that in such a scenario I have only "made as if to say" that I can speak in a squeaky voice). It would seem, then, that the third clause will have to be discarded (or at least modified) if saying requires meaning.

One positive result of discarding the third clause would be the disappearance of the "tip-of-the-tongue" problem. Another result, of course, would be that in scenarios (a) and (b) above, Herod could mean that John the Baptist was dead, and Bill could mean that he had a bandaged leg. These do not seem to me to be worrying consequences.

When it comes to linguistic utterances, there may well be another payoff. It might be thought that linguistic utterances are not normally underwritten by intentions as complex as *M*-intentions. The weakening of the analysans effected by the removal of clause (3) certainly goes a long way toward quieting this worry; however, as we shall now see, there are grounds for thinking that the relevant intention will have to be more complex than the one specified by clauses (1) and (2).

(iii) *The analysis is too weak*. The following type of example is used by Strawson and Schiffer to demonstrate that clauses (1), (2), and (3) do not specify a rich enough intention (or batch of intentions). Suppose *A*, a friend of mine, is about to buy a house. I think the house is rat-infested, but I don't want to mention this outright to *A* so I let rats loose in the house knowing that *A* is watching me. I know that *A* does not know that I know that he is watching me do this. I know *A* will not take the presence of my rats to be natural evidence that the house is rat-infested; but I do know, indeed I intend, that *A* will take my letting rats loose in the house as grounds for thinking that I intend to induce in him the belief that the house is rat-infested. Conditions (1)-(3) of (II) above are fulfilled. But surely it is not correct to say that by letting rats loose in the house I mean that the house is rat-infested.

The problem is that in this example my intentions are not, as Strawson puts it, *wholly overt*. One possible remedy involves adding a fourth clause:

(4) *A* to recognize that *U* intends (2).

But as Strawson and Schiffer point out, with enough ingenuity the same sort of counterexample can still be generated, and then we need a fifth clause, then a sixth, and so on. At the end of "Utterer's Meaning and Intentions," and again at the end of "Meaning Revisited," Grice proposes a way out of blocking an infinite regress by adding a condition that would prohibit any "sneaky" intention: instead of adding a fourth (fifth, . . .) clause, the idea is to add a second part to the entire analysis, the rough import of

which is that *U* does not intend *A* to be deceived about *U*'s intentions (1)-(3). As long as *U* does not have a deceptive intention of this sort, *U* is deemed to mean that *p*.[60]

In view of the earlier discussion of clause (3), my own inclination, then, is to take something like the following as the characterization of utterer's meaning emerging from *Studies* that it will be most fruitful to explore and refine:

(III) By uttering *x, U* meant that *p* iff for some audience *A,*
  (1) *U* uttered *x* intending *A* actively to entertain the thought that *p* (or the thought that *U* believes that *p*)
  (2) *U* uttered *x* intending *A* to recognize that *U* intends *A* actively to entertain the thought that *p*
  (3) *U* does not intend *A* to be deceived about *U*'s intentions (1) and (2).

6. Sentence Meaning and Saying

Some philosophers and linguists are tempted to construe Grice's analysis of utterer's meaning as simply an analysis of *communication* (the analysandum being 'by uttering *x, U* sought to communicate that *p*' rather than 'by uttering *x, U* meant that *p*'). This will not satisfy Grice: he wants an account of what he takes to be the "primary" or "basic" notion of meaning, a notion in terms of which other notions of (nonnatural) meaning—e.g. sentence meaning and word meaning—can be analyzed or defined. The idea of using utterer's meaning to explicate sentence meaning is thought by some philosophers and linguists to conflict with the idea that the meaning of a sentence is a function of the meanings of its parts (i.e. words and phrases) and their syntactical organization. The worry here seems to be that Grice's project gets something "backwards": surely any attempt to model how we work out what someone means on a given occasion will progress from word meaning plus syntax to sentence meaning, and from sentence meaning plus context to what is said, and from what is said plus context to what is meant. And doesn't this clash with Grice's view that sentence meaning is analysable in terms of utterer's meaning?

I do not think this can be correct. Whatever the virtues of the account of utterance interpretation just caricatured, it does not give rise to a conceptual objection to Grice's analytical project. It is helpful at this point to step back from the details of particular analyses and try to establish some sort of rationale for the view that utterer's meaning is analytically "primary" or "basic."[61] Something like the following seems to capture the

---

60 Some tentative remarks in the last section of "Meaning Revisited" suggest that a rationale for this proposal is to be located in the connection between value and rationality, a connection that is central to Grice's ethics and philosophical psychology. Other suggestions for cutting off the threatened regress involve appealing to *mutual knowledge* (Schiffer, 1972) or *self-referential intentions* (Harman, 1974). See also Récanati (1986) and Bach (1988).

61 On this matter, see also Strawson (1969), Schiffer (1972), Bennett (1976), Loar (1981), and Suppes (1986). It will not be possible in general to turn the tables on Grice and provide an account of utterer's meaning in terms of some such notion as utterance-type meaning. The reason for this is that it is possible for someone to mean something by uttering *x* even though neither *x* nor its production has any

spirit in which Grice addresses the notion of sentence meaning in *Studies*. Suppose there is a sentence *Y* of a language *L* such that *Y* means (pretheoretically speaking) "Paris is beautiful in springtime" (e.g., if *L* is English, then the sentence 'Paris is beautiful in springtime' would be an excellent candidate). Now it would surely be true to say, as a rough empirical generalization, that when *L*-speakers wish to mean that Paris is beautiful in springtime they are more likely to use *Y* than a sentence *Z* that means (pretheoretically speaking) "The well-being of beet farmers is important for economic growth." To say this is not to say that it is *impossible* for *U* to mean that Paris is beautiful in springtime by uttering *Z*—as we have already seen, it is possible for *U* to mean that Mr *X* is no good at philosophy by uttering 'Mr *X* has excellent handwriting and is always very punctual'—it's just to say that normally (usually, typically, standardly) *U* has a much better chance of getting across the intended message by uttering *Y*. Thus it might be suggested that an arbitrary sentence *X* means (in *L*) "Paris is beautiful in springtime" just in case (very roughly) by uttering *X*, optimally *L*-speakers mean (would mean/should mean) that Paris is beautiful in springtime.

It is no part of Grice's theory that in general a hearer must work out what *U* meant by uttering a sentence *X* in order to work out the meaning of *X*. Such a view is so clearly false that it is difficult to see how anyone might be induced to subscribe to it or attribute it to another philosopher. To claim that it is a consequence of Grice's theory involves, among other things, a failure to see any connection whatsoever between the Theory of Conversation and the Theory of Meaning. For it is Grice's express view, as we have seen, that typically the hearer must establish what *U* has said (or made as if to say) in order to establish what *U* meant; and it is by taking into account the nature and purpose of rational discourse that the hearer is able to progress (via, e.g., conversational implicature) from what *U* has said (or made as if to say) to what *U* meant. Grice himself is explicit on this point:

> Of course, I would not want to deny that when the vehicle of meaning is a sentence (or the utterance of a sentence), the speaker's intentions are to be recognized, in the normal case, by virtue of a knowledge of the conventional use of the sentence (indeed, my account of nonconventional implicature depends on this idea) (pp. 100–1).

Importantly, an *analysis* of sentence meaning in terms of utterer's intentions does not conflict with this idea.

Perhaps the best way of getting clear about this is with the help of a distinction between (i) accounts of what *U* said and what *U* meant by uttering *X* and (ii) accounts of how hearers recover what *U* said and what *U* meant by uttering *X*.[62] There are of course

---

established meaning. Of course, one might take this to show that the notion of utterer's meaning associated with the utterance of (e.g.) a device belonging to a linguistic system is quite different from the system-free notion of utterer's meaning, instances of which Grice spends much of his time examining.

62 When discussing particular utterances of utterance-types I will use upper case *X* rather than lower case *x*. Thus "by uttering *X*" can be understood as "by uttering *x* (a token of type *X*)." This seems to me to conform to Grice's usage and, by hypothesis, his intent.

important connections here; but they are not of such a character that utterer's meaning cannot be used in characterizations of sentence meaning and saying. The important connection is really the following. What *U* meant by uttering *X* is determined solely by *U*'s communicative intentions; but of course the *formation* of genuine communicative intentions by *U* is constrained by U's expectations: *U* cannot be said to utter *X M*-intending *A* to ϕ if *U* thinks that there is very little or no hope that *U*'s production of *X* will result in *A* ϕ-ing.[63] If *U M*-intends *A* actively to entertain the belief that (*U* thinks) Paris is beautiful in springtime, and *U* and *A* are both English speakers, *U* may well utter the English sentence 'Paris is beautiful in springtime'. To say this is not to commit Grice to the view that sentences that are not directly (or not *so* directly) connected to the proposition that Paris is beautiful in springtime may not be employed to the same effect. On the contrary, the Theory of Conversation is supposed to provide an explanation of how this is possible (in the right circumstances). On the assumption that *U* and *A* are both operating in accordance with the Cooperative Principle and maxims, there may well be facts about the context of utterance, the topic of conversation, background information, and so on that make it possible for *U* to mean that Paris is beautiful in springtime by uttering a very different sentence. *U*'s conception of such things as the context of utterance, the topic of conversation, background information, and *A*'s ability to work out what *U* is up to may all play rôles in the *formation* of *U*'s intentions; but this does not undermine the view that what determines what *U* means are *U*'s communicative intentions.

I think we can put aside, then, the question of the conceptual coherence of Grice's analytical program; the interesting questions concern the adequacy of his concrete proposals for explicating sentence meaning and saying. The basic idea is to analyse sentence meaning in terms of utterer's meaning, and then define saying in terms of a near coincidence of utterer's meaning and sentence meaning. Sentence meaning for Grice is a species of complete utterance-type meaning, the relevant analysandum for which is '*X* means "*p*"', where *X* is an utterance type and *p* is a specification of *X*'s meaning.[64] Grice puts forward the following as indicative of the general approach he is inclined to explore:

(IV) For population group *G*, complete utterance-type *X* means "*p*" iff (a) at least some (many) members of *G* have in their behavioral repertoires the procedure of uttering a token of *X* if they mean that *p*, and (b) the retention of this

63 On this matter, see Grice (1971).

64 Because of the possibility of (e.g.) ambiguous expressions, Grice distinguishes between the "timeless" and "applied timeless" meaning of an utterance-type (perhaps "occasion-independent" would have been a better label than "timeless" in view of Grice's evident desire to explicate what expressions mean in terms of what speakers do with them and thereby provide an explanation of the possibility of semantic change). Since the philosophical issues raised by ambiguous expressions do not impinge in any serious way on those aspects of Grice's theory I am considering, I shall proceed as if there is no distinction to be made between timeless and applied timeless meaning. Consequently, I have not followed Grice in inserting the parenthetical gloss "(has as one of its meanings)" after "means" in (IV).

> procedure is for them conditional on the assumption that at least some (other) members of *G* have, or have had, this procedure in their repertoires.[65]

For a language containing no context-sensitive expressions, the technical difficulties involved in Grice's use of the variable '*p*' both in and out of quotes can be remedied easily enough. But once we turn (as we must) to complete utterance-type meaning for a language that contains indexicals such as 'I' and 'you', demonstratives such as 'this' and 'that', and anaphoric pronouns such as 'him' and 'her', it is clear that some work is needed to transform (IV) into something acceptable.[66] This is, I think, a very serious matter; for without such a transformation, Grice simply will not be able to provide an analysis of utterance-type meaning for a language like English, and consequently he will not be able to provide the sort of definition of saying he wants.

What, then, is the precise relation between sentence meaning and saying for Grice? It might be thought that if we abstract away from the problems raised by indexicals and other expressions that highlight the gap between sentence meaning and what is said, we will be able to move directly from 'when uttered by *U*, *X* meant "*p*"' to 'by uttering X, *U* said that *p*'. But there are two problems here. First, only where an utterance-type has certain features do we want to say that a token of that type may be used to *say* something. A motorist does not say anything, in Grice's sense, when he indicates an intention to make a left turn by signalling. Second, certain cases involving (e.g.) irony or conversational implicature can be used to show that we cannot make the relevant move directly. If *U* utters the sentence 'Fred is an honest man' ironically, although it would be true to say that the sentence in question means "Fred is an honest man," it would not be true to say that *U* is *saying* that Fred is an honest man (pp. 119-120). On Grice's account, since *U* does not *mean* that Fred is an honest man—*U* has no intention of getting *A* to believe that (he believes that) Fred is an honest man—*U* is only *making as if to say* that Fred is an honest man. (Parallel remarks could apply in the case of Professor *U*'s utterance of the sentence 'Mr *X* has wonderful handwriting and is always very punctual'.) On Grice's account, what is said is to be found in the area where sentence meaning and utterer's meaning overlap. Abstracting away from context-sensitive expressions once again, it looks as though something like the following preliminary definition is on the right track (pp. 87–88, pp. 118–121):

(V) By uttering *X*, *U* said that *p* iff
(1) by uttering *X*, part of what *U* meant was that *p*

---

65 Grice actually proceeds to the analysis of complete utterance-type meaning in a language *via* complete utterance-type meaning in an idiolect. This can be suppressed for present concerns.

66 The fact that context-sensitive expressions create difficulties for this general approach to utterance-type meaning is noted by Schiffer (1972). On Schiffer's own account, an adequate specification of the counterpart of condition (b) will entail that it is *mutual knowledge* among the members of *G* that most members of *G* have, or have had, this procedure in their repertoires. Contrary to widespread belief, Grice himself does not appeal to Schiffer's notion of *mutual knowledge*, or to Lewis's (1969, 1975) notions of *common knowledge* or *convention* in his account of linguistic meaning.

(2) *X* consists of a sequence of elements (such as words) ordered in a way licensed by a system of rules (syntactical rules), and
(3) *X* means "*p*" in virtue of the particular meanings of the elements in *X*, their order and their syntactical structure.[67]

Grice's unhappiness with (V) derives from the existence of *conventional* implicatures.[68] Recall that Grice does not want to allow the sorts of implications that result from the use of words such as 'but', yet', 'still', 'even', and 'moreover', to count as part of what is said. For example, if *U* (sincerely and nonironically) utters the sentence 'She is poor but she is honest', *U* does not *say* that there is some sort of contrast between poverty and honesty (or between her poverty and her honesty). Rather, *U* performs a "central speech act," by which *U* says that she is poor and she is honest, and performs in addition a "noncentral speech act," by which *U* conventionally implicates some sort of attitude toward what is said. Putting together what *U* says and what *U* conventionally implicates we get *what U conventionally means* (see Fig. 2). So for Grice, at best the three conditions in (V) define 'by uttering *X*, *U* conventionally meant that *p*' rather than 'by uttering *X*, *U* said that *p*'.

Grice goes no further in *Studies.* In short, he leaves us with the nontrivial task of separating what *U* says and what *U* conventionally implicates. This may seem like a rather disappointing terminus. The more one reflects on his work, the more one feels that the notion of what is said is for Grice a fundamentally important notion in philosophy. If this or that philosopher is unclear about what he is saying (as opposed to what he or she is implicating) then that philosopher is liable to make all sorts of mistakes, as is borne out, Grice thinks, by the crude way in which, for instance the Causal Theory of Perception and the Theory of Descriptions have been written off by philosophers concerned with the nuances of ordinary language. Furthermore, not until what is said and what is conventionally implicated are separated can what is conversationally implicated be defined in the manner examined earlier. So for Grice, an analysis of saying really does take on some urgency, and it is unfortunate that he does not get any closer to one than he does in producing (V) above. However, it may well be that Grice has brought us as far as we can go without crossing our own paths. Recall that Grice wants what is said to

---

67 It is clear that condition (3) must ultimately make reference to applied timeless meaning rather than timeless meaning. In Grice's initial discussion of saying (pp. 87–88), the suggested definiens makes reference to what *X* means (timeless meaning) rather than to what *X* meant *here* (applied timeless meaning). But suppose *X* has "*q*" as well as "*p*" as one of its meanings. In principle, *U* might produce a token of *X* that means here "*q*" and thereby conversationally implicate that *p*. Clearly Grice would not want to count this as a case of saying that *p*, and this is probably why his later definiens (pp. 120) makes reference to applied timeless meaning.

68 The nature of conditions (2) and (3) demonstrates just how wrong it is to claim that Grice rejects the view that the meaning of a sentence is a function of the meanings of its parts and their syntactical arrangement. At the same time, it should be noted that charges of circularity sparked by the appearance in (V) of the notion of word meaning are groundless: for Grice, word meaning is a species of incomplete utterance-type meaning, a notion which is itself to be analysed in terms of complete utterance-type meaning.

comprise the truth-conditional content of what is conventionally meant by someone making an indicative utterance; but he cannot make a direct appeal to truth conditions for fear of undermining one part of his project. There may be no simple way out of this. At the same time, it should be stressed that only one part of Grice's project is threatened: the possibility of providing a definition of saying in terms of utterance-type meaning and what is meant. No appeal to truth-conditional content is needed in analyses of *utterer's meaning* or *utterance-type meaning*, and to that extent Grice has certainly illuminated these important notions. In so doing, he has also alerted us to a host of important distinctions that philosophers, linguists, cognitive scientists, and literary theorists ignore at their peril.

The work of Grice's that has found its way into *Studies* constitutes a major contribution to philosophy and linguistics; as such its appearance will help to ensure that Grice is remembered as one of the most gifted and respected philosophers of the second half of the twentieth century. He set impossibly high standards for himself and others. Although he produced dozens of first-rate papers, he was always reluctant to go into print—by all accounts heroic efforts were required by editors and friends to extract from him the handful of papers that he deemed worthy of publication. The William James Lectures trickled into print in diverse places between 1968 and 1978 and consequently important connections between the Theory of Conversation and the Theory of Meaning have tended to be missed, ignored, or downplayed. Having the lectures together (and complete) in *Studies* will (hopefully) encourage people to pay more attention to these connections, some of which seem to be vitally important for understanding Grice's philosophy of language, and for making progress in philosophy and linguistics more generally. No one with a serious interest in language should be without a copy of this book.

Department of Philosophy
University of California, Berkeley

References

Adams, E. [1992]. Grice on Indicative Conditionals. To appear in *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*.

Armstrong, D. (1971). Meaning and Communication. *Philosophical Review* 80, 427–447.

Avramides, A. (1989). *Meaning and Mind*, Cambridge: MIT Press.

Bach, K. (1987). On Communicative Intentions: A Reply to Récanati. *Mind and Language* 2, 141–154.

Bach, K., and M. Harnish (1979). *Linguistic Communication and Speech Acts*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

Barwise, J., and R. Cooper (1981). Generalized Quantifiers and Natural Language. *Linguistics and Philosophy* 4, 159–219.

Bennett, J. (1976) *Linguistic Behavior*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Blackburn, S. (1984). *Spreading the Word*: *Groundings in the Philosophy of Language*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Carston, R. (1988). Implicature, Explicature, and Truth-theoretic Semantics. In R. Kempson (ed.) *Mental Representations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 155–181.

Chomsky, N. (1965). *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Cohen, J. (1971). Some Remarks on Grice's Views about the Logical Particles of Natural Language. In Y. Bar-Hillel (ed.), *Pragmatics of Natural Language*. Dordrecht: Reidel, 50–68.

Donnellan, K. (1966). Reference and Definite Descriptions. *Philosophical Review* 77, 281–304.

Gazdar, G. (1979). *Pragmatics: Presupposition, Implicature, and Logical Form.* New York: Academic Press.

Grandy, R. (1989). On Grice on Language. *Journal of Philosophy*, 514–525.

Grice, P. (1941). Personal Identity. *Mind*, 50 (1941), 330–350; reprinted in J. Perry (ed.), *Personal Identity*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975, 73–95.

Grice, P. (1957). Meaning. *Philosophical Review* 66, 377–388.

Grice, P. (1961). The Causal Theory of Perception. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, suppl. vol. 35, 121–52.

Grice, P. (1968). Utterer's Meaning, Sentence Meaning and Word Meaning. *Foundations of Language* 4, 225–242.

Grice, P. (1969). Vacuous Names. In D. Davidson and J. Hintikka (eds.), *Words and Objections*. Dordrecht: Reidel, 118–145.

Grice, P. (1969a). Utterer's Meaning and Intentions. *Philosophical Review* 78, 147–177.

Grice, P. (1970). Lectures on Logic and Reality. University of Illinois at Urbana.

Grice, P. (1971). Intention and Uncertainty. *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 263–279.

Grice, P. (1975). Method in Philosophical Psychology: From the Banal to the Bizarre. *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* (1975) 23–53.

Grice, P. (1975a). Logic and Conversation. In P. Cole and J. Morgan (eds.), *Syntax and Semantics, vol. 3: Speech Acts*. New York: Academic Press, 41–58.

Grice, P. (1978). Further Notes on Logic and Conversation. In P. Cole (ed.), *Syntax and Semantics, vol. 9: Pragmatics*, New York: Academic Press, 113–128.

Grice, P. (1981). Presupposition and Conversational Implicature. In P. Cole (ed.), *Radical Pragmatics.* New York: Academic Press, 183–198.

Grice, P. (1986). Reply to Richards. In R. Grandy and R. Warner (eds.), *Philosophical Grounds of Rationality*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Grice, P. (1991). *The Carus Lectures*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Harman, G. (1974). Review of *Meaning* by S. Schiffer. *Journal of Philosophy* 70, 7.

Harnish, M. (1976). Logical Form and Implicature. In T. Bever *et al*. (eds.), *An Integrated Theory of Linguistic Ability*. Crowell: New York, pp. 313–391.

Hugly P., and C. Sayward (1979). A Problem About Conversational Implicature. *Linguistics and Philosophy* 3, 19–25.

Jackson., F. (1988). *Conditionals.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Keenan, E. (1976). The Universality of Conversational Implicature. *Language in Society* 5, 67–80.

Kempson, R. (1975). *Presupposition and the Delimitation of Semantics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kripke, S. (1977). Speaker Reference and Semantic Reference. In P. A. French, T. E. Uehling, Jr., and H. K. Wettstein, *Contemporary Perspectives in the Philosophy of Language*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 6–27.

Leech, G. (1983). *Principles of Pragmatics*. London: Longman.

Levinson, S. (1983). *Pragmatics.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lewis, D. (1969). *Convention*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Lewis, D. (1975). Languages and Language. In K. Gunderson (ed.), *Language, Mind, and Knowledge*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, pp. 3-35.

Loar, B. (1981). *Mind and Meaning.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

McDowell, J. (1980). Meaning, Communication, and Knowledge. In Z. van Straaten (ed.), *Philosophical Subjects. Essays Presented to P. F. Strawson*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Mackie, J. (1973). *Truth, Probability, and Paradox*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Nagel, T. (1979). *Mortal Questions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Neale, S. (1990). *Descriptions*, Cambridge: MIT Press.

Posner, R. (1980). Semantics and Pragmatics of Sentence Connectives in Natural Language. In J. R. Searle *et al* (eds.), *Speech Act Theory and Pragmatics*. Dordrecht: Reidel, 169–203.

Rawls, J. (1971). *A Theory of Justice.* Cambridge: Harvard.

Récanati, F. (1986). Defining Communicative Intentions. *Mind and Language 1, 213–242*.

Ryle, G. (1949). *The Concept of Mind*. London: Hutchison.

Sadock, J. (1978). On Testing for Conversational Implicature. In In P. Cole (ed.), *Syntax and Semantics, vol. 9: Pragmatics*, New York: Academic Press, 281–298.

Schiffer, S. (1972). *Meaning*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Searle, J. (1969). *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Searle, J. (1975). A Taxonomy of Illocutionary Acts. In K. Gunderson (ed.), *Language, Mind and Knowledge, Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science, Vol VII*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 344–369.

Searle, J. (1979). Referential and Attributive. *The Monist* 62, 140–208. (Reprinted in *Expression and Meaning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, 137–161.)

Sperber, D., and D. Wilson (1981). Irony and the Use-mention Distinction. In P. Cole (ed.), *Radical Pragmatics*. New York: Academic Press, 295–318.

Sperber, D., and D. Wilson (1986). *Relevance: Communication and Cognition*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Stenius, E. (1967). Mood and language-Game. *Synthese* 17, 254–274.

Strawson, P. (1950). On Referring. *Mind* 59, 320–344. Reprinted in Strawson's *Logico-Linguistic Papers*. London: Methuen, *1971,* 1–27.

Strawson, P. (1952). *Introduction to Logical Theory.* London: Methuen.

Strawson, P. (1964). Intention and Convention in Speech Acts. *Philosophical Review, 73,* Strawson (1971), Reprinted in Strawson's *Logico-Linguistic Papers.* London: Methuen, *1971,* 149–169.

Strawson, P. (1969). Meaning and Truth. Inaugural Lecture, University of Oxford, November 1969. Reprinted in Strawson's *Logico-Linguistic Papers.* London: Methuen, *1971,* 170–189.

Strawson, P. (1986). 'If' and '⊃'. In R. Grandy and R. Warner (eds.), *Philosophical Grounds of Rationality*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 229–242.

Suppes, P. (1986). The Primacy of Utterer's Meaning. In R. Grandy and R. Warner (eds.), *Philosophical Grounds of Rationality*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 109–129.

Vlach, F. (1981). Speaker's meaning. *Linguistics and Philosophy* 4, 359–381.

Walker, R. (1975). Conversational Implicatures. In S. Blackburn (ed.) *Meaning, Reference and Necessity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 133–181

Wilson, D., and D. Sperber (1981). On Grice's Theory of Conversation. In P. Werth (ed.), *Conversation and Discourse*. London: Croom Helm, 155–178.

Wilson, D., and D. Sperber (1986). On Defining Relevance. In R. Grandy and R. Warner (eds.), *Philosophical Grounds of Rationality*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 243–258.

Yu, P. (1979). On the Gricean Program about Meaning. *Linguistics and Philosophy* 3, 273–288.

Ziff. P. (1967). On H. P. Grice's Account of Meaning. *Analysis* 28, 1–8.