

Speaker's meaning

(Andreas Kemmerling)

1. Grice's original analysis of speaker's meaning

The subject of this contribution started life under the name of “meaning_{NN} something by uttering something”. It became utterer's meaning, speaker's meaning, utterer's occasion meaning and nowadays it seems to be mostly referred to as speaker meaning. The seminal paper is Paul Grice's “Meaning” published in 1957 (Grice 1989: 213–223).¹ It was written in the late 1940s, but Grice did not care, or dare, to publish it. It was his friend and former pupil Peter Strawson who, unbeknownst to Grice, sent it to the *Philosophical Review*. The paper was accepted for publication first by the journal and then by the author.

In this short paper Grice first distinguishes two senses, or families of senses, of the word “to mean”, and then goes on to develop at some length an explication of the concept of speaker's meaning. He, and others after him, have tried to use this concept as a basis, or important ingredient, of larger projects designed to explicate various aspects of human communication and specifically of the nature of linguistic meaning. For this reason it will be necessary to mention some related issues. But I shall try to focus on speaker's meaning as exclusively as I can.

1.1. Keeping two senses of “meaning” apart

The first sense of “to mean”, which Grice calls natural meaning (meaning_N), is the sort of meaning at issue in statements like

Those spots mean measles.

¹ Let me mention as an aside that the term *speaker's meaning* was also introduced by C. S. Lewis (1960: 14 ff.) who uses it in almost the same sense as Grice, albeit without an explication, nor a reference to Grice. Both men were fellows at Oxford university for many years; Lewis of Magdalen College from 1925 to 1954, Grice at St. John's from 1939 to 1967. For almost twenty years Grice was a university lecturer as well – which meant that, in addition to the teaching at his college, he gave lectures which were open to all members of Oxford university.

The recent budget means that we shall have a hard year.

The second sense he dubbed nonnatural meaning ($\text{meaning}_{\text{NN}}$). As examples for this sense of the word, he offers:

The three rings of the bell (of the bus) mean that the bus is full.

That remark “Smith couldn’t get on without his struggle and strife” meant that Smith found his wife indispensable.

There are, as Grice notes, other uses of “to mean”. An example would be

He did not mean to insult you by calling you a pooka.

So the natural/nonnatural distinction is not supposed to be exhaustive of the senses of the word “to mean”. – Grice mentions five features in respect of which the two senses differ. Here are four of them: (i) “to mean that” in the nonnatural sense is not a factive phrase, *i.e.*, if used in this sense, “ x means that p ” does not entail “ p ”, but (ii) it entails that something is meant by x , and, somewhat more specifically, (iii) that it is somebody, a person, who means that p . In contrast, if “to mean that” is used in the natural sense, “ x means that p ” does entail that p , and the two conclusions just mentioned cannot be drawn. – He furthermore mentions a sort of orthographic difference: (iv) Only in some of the nonnatural uses of “mean” it is appropriate to specify what is meant with the aid of quotation marks. Whereas the first example for $\text{meaning}_{\text{NN}}$ above can be restated as

The three rings of the bell (of the bus) mean: “The bus is full”,

the sentence “Those spots mean measles” cannot be reformulated as

Those spots mean: “measles”.

This fourth distinguishing feature may appear to be nothing but a subtle fortuity of sufficiently highly developed languages, but Grice holds it to be “semantically important” (1989: 118) and puts emphasis on it in his later and even latest writings (1989: 291, 349).²

Grice gives several examples to illustrate the distinction. When Herod presents Salome with the decapitated head of St. John the Baptist on a charger, his utterance (the presenting of the head) means_N that John is dead, but Herod does not therein mean_{NN} that John is dead. If instead of presenting the head he had told her “John is dead”, then he would have meant_{NN} by his utterance that John is dead. – If a detective shows his client a photograph of his wife in bed with another man, he does not mean_{NN} thereby that she has been unfaithful. But he could mean_{NN} this, if instead he drew a sketch of this scene and showed it to the husband. Grice offers examples like these in support of one of his crucial claims: that it is a necessary ingredient in meaning_{NN} that the utterer not only intends, by his utterance, to induce a belief in his addressee³, but also intends his utterance to be recognized as so intended. More about this below.

The very labels Grice chooses in making this distinction are worth noting. In speaking of *nonnatural* meaning (in contrast to the natural), he departs from the traditional labelings of what *prima facie* may seem to have been, more or less, the same distinction. The philosophical tradition, from Plato on, had something like “conventional” instead of “nonnatural”. Whichever phrase had been chosen by Plato, Aquinas, Arnauld and others, to mark the contrast between meaning_N and meaning_{NN}, pre-Gricean labelings typically suggested that something norm-like (an agreement, a law, custom, rule, or some other sort of socially enforced regularity) must be in play whenever there is meaning which is not natural. Maybe Grice was the first to be cautious and careful enough to open up terminological leeway for a sort of meaning which is neither natural nor conventional.⁴

² Stephen Schiffer (1972: 2–5) and Wayne Davis (1992: 225–226) suggest that the use of quote signs points to a special species of meaning_{NN}. Hence the kind of meaning at issue in reports of the sort “By x S meant ‘ p ’” differs from the kind which is at issue in “By doing x , S meant that p ”. The first sort may be called *speaker’s instrument meaning*, the second *speaker’s action meaning*. – In what follows, the focus will be on the second. See also § 2.3. below.

³ I prefer the term *addressee* (instead of *audience* or *bearer*), because there are cases in which the utterer is confronted with a “mixed” audience, consisting both of members in whom he wants to induce the relevant belief and others in whom he desires not to induce it. A wonderful example is to be found in Jorge Luis Borges’s “The Garden of the Forking Paths”. In this story, the meaning_{NN} of the utterance (an act of murder) is intended to be understood only by one part of the ‘audience’; it is crucial that the others don’t get the message.

⁴ Siobhan Chapman (2005: 71–72), drawing on unpublished lecture notes, points out that Grice’s distinction at least partly grew out of Oxford lectures on “Peirce’s general theory of signs” which he gave in Oxford after the second world war.

The two senses distinguished by Grice are not unrelated. They don't exemplify a mere homonymy. In the original paper Grice remarks that making this distinction will not "prohibit us from trying to give an explanation of *meaning*_{NN} in terms of one or another natural sense of "mean"" (1989: 215). In fact he later suggests that meaning in the natural sense is "in some specifiable way the ancestor" of nonnatural meaning (1989: 292).⁵

1.2. Lexicographical *vs* conceptual analysis

The way, just sketched, in which Grice distinguishes between these two senses of "to mean" may look like an attempt to give an analysis of nothing more than the uses of a word of the English language. His way of approaching the issue may therefore look like a piece of Ordinary Language Philosophy – in the depreciative sense of this phrase, in which it is often used. But lexicographical analysis is not at all what Grice is after. Indeed, he carefully investigates how the word "to mean" is used in ordinary language, but this enquiry is not done for its own sake. In attending to certain more or less uncontroversial linguistic facts, Grice is aiming to carve out and distinguish philosophically interesting concepts.

For Grice, it is concepts, not the words that point to them, which are of philosophical concern. What he is after with his analysis of *meaning*_{NN} is an account of a concept which is, if only indistinctly, reflected in one of the senses in which "to mean" is used in English. His findings about the use of the word serve to make his first step, that of distinguishing two different concepts of meaning, comprehensible and to give it some *prima facie* plausibility. The linguistic mastery one displays in competently using the word, in its different senses, indicates that he has some sort of grasp of the concepts in question, however incomplete, idiosyncratic or even partially distorted his grasp may be.

Unlike a purely lexicographical analysis, conceptual analysis is not committed to deal with each and every twist and turn in the use of a word. It may even make good sense, in analyzing a concept, to pretermit certain aspects of accepted usage. Here is a pertinent example. There are cases in which it can be said that *S*, by doing *x*, meant that *p* even though

⁵ Steven Davis (1998) argues that Grice's arguments fail to establish both that "x means that p" has two senses and that *meaning*_N and *meaning*_{NN} are two different sorts of meaning.

S maliciously intended his addressee to come to believe something quite different.⁶ But such cases are, as we shall see, incompatible with Grice's explication of the concept of meaning_{NN}. A lexicographical analysis of "to mean that *p*" would have to acknowledge this literal use of the phrase unconditionally.⁷

Things stand differently with conceptual analysis. It is an effort to bring to the fore the cognitive essence, if any, which is reflected in a certain use of a word or phrase (1989: 174 ff). As envisaged by Grice, it is an attempt to elucidate and delineate a phenomenon as clearly and distinctly as possible – a phenomenon which we have *prima facie* reason to think of as real, given our ways of using the pertinent words and phrases fully seriously.⁸

The phenomenon Grice's analysis of meaning_{NN} is about is a certain kind of human communication. This is not to say much. Human communication covers a very wide range, including indefinitely many things from spontaneous bodily movements to carefully calculated performances.

1.3. Approaching the analysis

Grice's basic assumption is that cases in which something is meant_{NN} involve intentions.⁹ In a standard case of meaning_{NN}, at least four items are in play: an agent (the so-called utterer), an action performed by the agent (the so-called utterance, not necessarily a verbal one), a second person (the addressee), and an intention of the agent which is directed at the addressee. According to Grice, in meaning something the utterer intends to bring

⁶ Think for example of what the Delphic priestess meant by her famous saying in 555 BC, when Croesus had asked the Oracle about whether he should attack Cyrus the Great on the other side of the river Halys. What she told him was "When Croesus crosses the Halys, he'll destroy a mighty kingdom". As the story is told, what she meant was that he would destroy his own kingdom, although she intended him to acquire the calamitous belief that he would destroy the Persian kingdom. – Another example, again a prophecy, we find in *Macbeth* (act 4, 1): "Macbeth shall never vanquish'd be, until Great Birnam wood to high Dunsinane hill shall come against him".

⁷ Of course, it is often a contentious issue whether (and which) lexicographical facts may be disregarded by a conceptual analysis. As to the sort of example mentioned in the previous note, see Andreas Kemmerling (1986: 139) and Wayne Davis (1992: 245–247).

⁸ Grice later speaks of this "so-called method of linguistic botanizing" as "a foundation for conceptual analysis in general and philosophical analysis in particular" (1989: 376). – This approach bears some similarity with how Epicurus recommends to start a philosophical inquiry concerning a phenomenon denoted by a given word (like, *e.g.*, "time"): First of all, one must firmly grasp the word's meaning, *i.e.*, the concept which is primarily attached to it. Only in virtue of this do we have a something to which the problem at issue can be referred. And we should not bring in new, supposedly better, terminology, but rather employ just those expressions for the phenomenon which are in common use. – *Cf.* his "Letter to Herodotus" (§§ 37–38 and 72).

⁹ By the way, this is not strictly entailed by the linguistic observations mentioned in § 1.1. above.

about a certain effect (the primary response) in the addressee – which may be a certain action, the acquisition of a new belief, or the mere activation of a belief already held by the addressee.

Since some of the ensuing considerations will involve a considerable degree of complexity, it will prove helpful to introduce some informal abbreviations, not only to save some space but also for the sake of perspicuity.

- S : the speaker or utterer (who does not need to be a speaker *sensu stricto*)¹⁰,
 A : the addressee (or “audience”)
 x_S : S ’s doing x (where values of x are restricted to perceptible actions)¹¹,
 $I_S(p)$: S intends to bring it about that p ,
 $B_A(p)$: A believes that p ,
 r_A : A responds in way r (where values of r include the acquiring of a belief).

In the following, the focus will be on cases in which S has the primary intention to induce a *new* belief in his addressee. This is to say, we shall only consider cases in which, for some suitable value of “ p ”: $r_A = B_A(p)$. These are cases in which the utterer does not assume that his addressee already believes that p .¹² In such a case of meaning_{NN}, the utterer performs some action, thereby intending to bring it about that the addressee comes to believe that p . This is the first condition of the Gricean *analysans*:

[1] $I_S(B_A(p))$.

1.4. Intended belief-production: not brute but reason-based

How is the addressee supposed to come, in the face of the x_S , to believe that p ? Basically, there seem to be two possibilities: either the action itself (or his perception of it, if

¹⁰ I shall use “utterer” and “speaker” interchangeably, as is common practice in discussing issues of speaker’s meaning.

¹¹ Using a distinction of Austin’s (Austin 1975: 92), “ x ” denotes the *utteratum* and “ x_S ” the *utteratio*.

¹² For an analysis of the other type of case, where the primary response is not a belief, see Stephen Schiffer (1972: 58 ff.).

you prefer¹³) produces in him the belief, or the action itself does not produce the belief, but gives him some reason to acquire it. An example of the first kind would be a case in which someone is brought to believe that he has just been punched. Presumably, most people will acquire such a belief as soon as they receive a hard blow on the nose. But if *S* were to deliver a hard blow on *A*'s nose, intending thereby to create this belief in him, he would not have meant, by his blow, that *A* has just been punched. *A*'s coming to believe this would be a brute (“automatic”) reaction to the blow; he has no rational control over his believing it or not. A somewhat less violent example would be a case in which a hypnotist, by whispering something into *A*'s ear while *A* is in trance, intends to bring it about that *A*, when he returns to full awareness, will find himself believing that he has just been punched. Again, the hypnotist does not mean_{NN} by his whispering that *A* has just been punched. – So brute, “causal”, belief production should be dismissed. Grice holds that the way in which the utterer intends his addressee to come to believe that *p* should therefore involve his attempt to give *A* some reason or other to believe that *p*.

1.5. Intended belief-production: intention recognized

Here is a case in which *S* intends to give *A* a reason to believe that *p* but in which he doesn't mean_{NN} that *p* by his action¹⁴: *S* leaves Mr. Bird's monogrammed handkerchief at the scene of a murder in order to induce the detective to believe that Mr. Bird was the murderer. In putting the handkerchief there, *S* intends to give the detective a reason to believe that Bird committed the murder; but he doesn't mean_{NN} this by his action. Why is such a case not a case of meaning_{NN}? Grice's answer: Because the detective is intended *not* to recognize certain things: notably that his alleged evidence is a product of an action performed with the intention to get him to believe that Bird is the murderer. If he knew more about what he is confronted with (especially about an evidence-planter's involvedness and his intention), he would have no reason to believe what he is intended to believe. In such a case, *A*'s ignorance about *S*'s action (and specifically about *S*'s intention behind the action) is crucial for

¹³ For the sake of brevity, I shall leave this adjunct aside. Not because I consider the difference it points to as non-existing or irrelevant, but rather because nothing discussed here seems to hinge on this difference.

¹⁴ See Grice (1989: 217).

achieving the desired effect. This is why the utterer doesn't mean_{NN} what he gives the addressee a reason to believe.

The lesson to be drawn from this is that an action by which it is meant_{NN} that p should be recognized by the addressee as an action which is openly directed at him with the intention to induce in him the belief that p .

1.6. Intended belief-production: recognition of intention as a reason to believe

As we have seen in § 1.4., the utterer must try to give the addressee a reason to believe that p . But what kind of reason? Again, at least two possibilities need to be distinguished: either the utterance itself – S 's very action, independently of any motive he may have for performing it – gives A reason to believe that p , or it doesn't. Consider a case of the first type. When Herod presents her with St. John's decapitated head on a charger, Salome has good reason to believe that John is dead. The action itself (the presentation of the head) evinces that he is dead.¹⁵ Although Herod thereby gives Salome a reason to believe what he wants her to believe, he doesn't mean_{NN} that John is dead. The first lesson Grice draws from this is that the utterance, by which it is meant_{NN} that p , must not be all by itself sufficient to give A reason to believe that p . (Consequently, one cannot, by uttering x , mean_{NN} that p if one assumes that one's addressee takes x_S to mean_N that p .) But what then is it, about x_S , that is supposed to constitute the reason, given that x_S itself doesn't? Grice's answer is this: The reason the utterer wants to provide his addressee with is the very fact already recorded in [1]: namely, that he intends the addressee to come to believe that p . It follows that S must have the intention that his first intention be recognized by the addressee:

$$[2] I_S(B_A(I_S(B_A(p))))).$$

The fulfillment of his second intention (*i.e.*, A 's recognizing the truth of [1]) will, as the utterer assumes, lead to the fulfillment of his primary intention (*i.e.*, to A 's believing that p). How is such recognition of intention supposed to lead to A 's believing that p ? It is

¹⁵ But note that she is in rational control over whether to believe it or not. (She may be, *e.g.*, suspicious about whether it is really John's head, or rather a wax copy of it, which she sees on the charger.)

supposed to achieve that in virtue of the fact that the intention recognized gives \mathcal{A} a reason to believe that p . So in bringing him to notice that he wants him to believe that p , the utterer wants to give the addressee a reason to believe that p . Let us abbreviate this as

$$[3] I_S[RB_{\mathcal{A}}(I_S(B_{\mathcal{A}}(p)),p)],$$

where $RB_{\mathcal{A}}(x,p)$ is short for: x is a reason, or part of a reason, for \mathcal{A} to believe that p .

At first sight, this may seem an astonishing thought. Imagine we watch S performing some action, x , directed at \mathcal{A} and could ask him why he does x . Reply: “I want \mathcal{A} to believe that p ”. We go on asking: But why should \mathcal{A} believe that p in view of your doing x ? Reply: “Well, basically because I want him to believe it. And I think he will recognize this when I do x ”. – If you don’t find the second reply somewhat startling, you may be the sort of genius many people think Grice to have been. – Astonishing or not, the thought that recognition of an intention to make one believe something may serve as one’s reason to actually believe it, this thought has become one of the most influential ideas in the contemporary philosophy of language.

It is crucial to see why the fulfillment of merely [1] and [2] is not enough for meaning_{NN} . In our above example, Herod intends Salome to come to believe that St. John is dead; hence [1] is satisfied. Let’s assume he also wants her to recognize that he has this intention; hence [2] is satisfied. But if Salome does indeed notice that Herod intends her to believe that John is dead, what could possibly be the point of her noticing his intention? As soon as she sees the head on the charger, she will come to believe that John is dead anyway. She doesn’t have to care in the least about what Herod wants her to believe, in order to have reason to believe that John is dead. Her recognition of Herod’s intention wouldn’t do any work in her acquisition of the belief in question.

So here is why Herod does not mean, by his presentation, that St. John is dead: Salome’s recognition of his primary intention is bound to be cognitively idle (as Herod must know). – Generalizing from this example, what is still missing, if we are given only [1] and [2], is a rational connection between the two intentions.

Put differently, if we are just given [1] and [2], the question arises: *Why* should S want \mathcal{A} to recognize his primary intention? And the answer, not yet captured by requiring [1] and [2], is this: He intends his primary intention to be recognized because he assumes that it is

exactly this recognition which provides the addressee with a reason to believe that p . So in a sense, the utterer has the second intention because he has the first. It is this point which Grice wants to bring out by [3]. This clause reflects a certain facet of rationality both on the part of the utterer himself and on the part of his addressee, as the utterer envisages him. As to the utterer, [3] shows how his two other intentions are rationally connected. As to the addressee, [3] indicates the reason he is supposed to be provided with for coming to believe that p .

These three clauses form the *analysans* of Grice's original explication of "(By uttering x) S means_{NN} that p ".¹⁶

1.7. The first analysis, and how to understand it

Put back into plain words, Grice's first analysis of speaker's meaning can be rendered as follows:

SM1	<p>In uttering x towards his addressee A, utterer S means that p</p> <p style="text-align: center;">if and only if</p> <p>in uttering x towards A</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) S intends to bring it about that A believes that p, (2) S intends to bring it about that A believes that S intends to bring it about that A believes that p, and (3) S intends that the fact, recognized by A, that S intends to bring it about that A believes that p provides A with a reason, or part of a reason, to believe that p.
------------	---

In the light of what has been considered in the previous section, these three clauses give us just the bare outline of what Grice is driving at with his explication. In a fuller characterization of the phenomenon analyzed at least five features should be mentioned. Not all of these features are explicitly mentioned in the three clauses which make up the

¹⁶ In the following I shall drop the subscript, except when it is needed to avoid confusion.

analysans. But they clearly play a role for Grice when he originally arrives at **SM1** and later on develops and defends it.

One important feature of speaker's meaning is *rationality*. Rationality is essentially involved on both sides. Not only does the utterer perform his utterance for a reason, but he also assumes that his addressee is a rational being who desires to believe something only if he is given appropriate reason to believe it. A second feature is, of course, *nonnaturalness*: The utterance must not be a piece of obvious natural evidence for the very state of affairs which *S* wants *A* to believe to obtain. (It should be noted that, nevertheless, the utterance may well be a natural sign of several other states of affairs.) This leads to the third: *intention-dependence*: The reason (for believing that *p*) which *S* wants to give *A* is one which has to do with what *S* intends to achieve with his utterance. A fourth feature may be dubbed *motivational transparency*. *S* wants his action motive (*i.e.*, his intention to bring *A* to believe that *p*) to be transparent for *A*. It may even seem that *S* should strive for optimal transparency. For the easier it is for *A* to recognize what *S* intends with his utterance, the better the chances for the fulfillment of *S*'s primary intention. A fifth feature is *reliance*. Consider exactly what reason *A* has to believe that *p* in virtue of recognizing that *S* wants him to believe that *p*. His mere recognition of *S*'s intention gives *A* hardly any reason to believe that *p*. If *A* is dubious about *S*'s reliability, he may wonder: "Maybe *S* is trying to mislead me about this issue; or maybe he himself is mistaken as to whether *p*; maybe he doesn't have the slightest idea of whether *p* or not-*p*, but just wants me to believe it; maybe ...". In brief, *A* has to take *S* to be a somehow reliable *p*-informant, at least on the occasion of the utterance; otherwise *A* would have no plausible reason to come to believe that *p* in virtue of his recognition that *S* wants him to believe it.

As a sixth feature, of a somewhat different sort, we may consider *conceptually intrinsic explanatoriness*. When somebody informs us: "In uttering *x* on this and that occasion, *S* meant that *p*", we are not only being told what *S* then did (he uttered *x*). According to **SM1** we are informed why he did it (he wanted some addressee to come to believe that *p*); and we are informed about the very means he used (namely *x*). More than this, we get fairly specific information about how he thought that his using those means (*x*_{*S*}) could achieve the desired effect (namely *via* the addressee's recognition of his intention). This is not all. We are furthermore informed about how he conceived certain aspects of the addressee's state of mind (what he then thought could give the addressee a reason to believe that *p*). So the concept of speaker's meaning is not merely about an action and the agent's purpose in doing

it, but sheds light on highly specific aspects which are explanatory of why the agent acts as he does. – Grice doesn’t address this feature nor is it, as far as I can see, discussed in the secondary literature. (I just couldn’t resist mentioning it, but will resist dwelling on it.)¹⁷

It is worth being noticed that these five, or six, features of speaker’s meaning go together substantially. (In contrast, the conceptual features of being a bachelor are connected merely accidentally, or nominally: *male* has nothing to do with *adult*, and both have nothing to do with *unmarried*.) In speaker’s meaning, intention-dependence flows reasonably from nonnaturalness; intention-dependence is a good reason to aim at motivational transparency; and such transparency is rationally potent only if assisted by appropriate presumptions of reliance. (Little wonder that the concept is intrinsically explanatory.)

As a conclusion of this paragraph, see below a schematic representation of how \mathcal{A} is intended to acquire the belief that p . Jonathan Bennett has dubbed it *the Gricean Mechanism*.¹⁸ It deserves to be called the core of the Gricean analyses of speaker’s meaning. It comprises the doxastic pattern, on the addressee’s side, on the presence of which a utterer (who means_{NN} that p) relies, at least if normal conditions of human communication obtain.

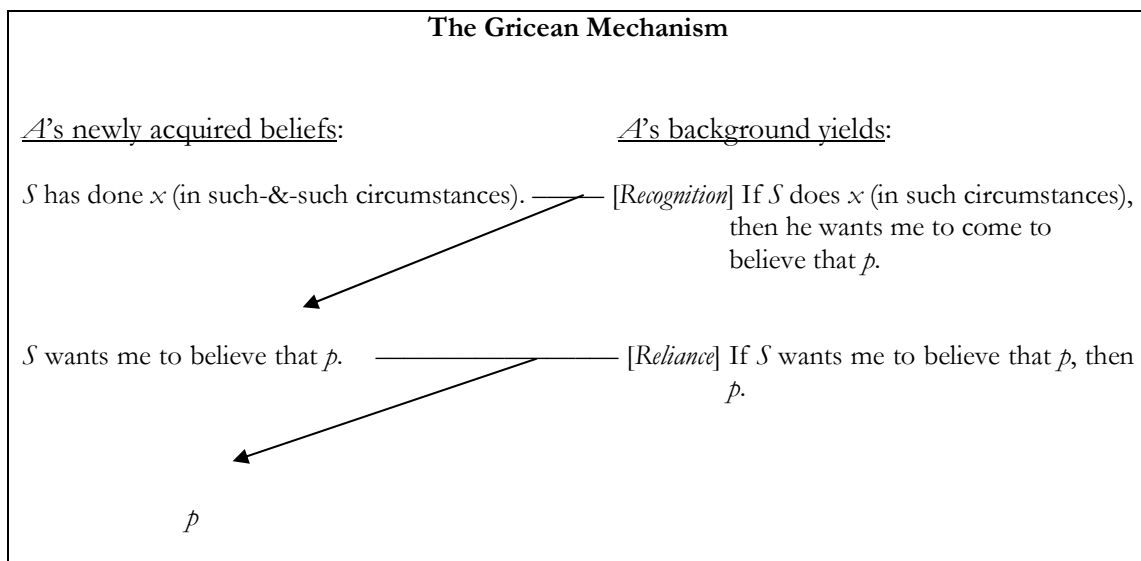
The schema below characterizes the addressee’s point of view, as envisaged by the utterer. It is meant to represent the relevant segment of an addressee’s “explicit” reasoning, if he were to reason at all.¹⁹ But note that the schema is not to be read as depicting a psychological process, triggered by the utterance – not even an “unconscious” one. Rather it is meant to represent a pattern of rational connections between beliefs. (The addressee can be supposed to have, or acquire, these beliefs, even if it would take him a certain amount of reflection to find out that he does.)

What you find on the left hand side of the schema are those beliefs which \mathcal{A} freshly acquires when he is confronted with \mathcal{S} ’s doing x . The beliefs listed on the right hand side are those of \mathcal{A} ’s beliefs which are not prompted by \mathcal{S} ’s utterance. In a standard case, these beliefs do not result from \mathcal{A} ’s perception of the utterance, but rather from an appropriate doxastic “background” on \mathcal{A} ’s part. The arrows are meant to represent a suitable reason-to-believe relation.

¹⁷ For a seventh candidate, a feature concerning morality, see the end of § 2.1. below.

¹⁸ Bennett (1973: 143).

¹⁹ No actual reasoning need to be involved in an act of speaker’s meaning. More about this below, § 4.1.



1.8. The addressee's background assumptions

The Gricean Mechanism raises various questions. Concerning the background assumptions –*i.e.*, the assumptions supposed to support [Recognition] and [Reliance]–, the question arises: What are they? In his original account Grice is silent about this. One could perhaps speculate that an acceptable answer would be: Any background assumptions whatever which do the job. But we shall see (in § 2.5. below) that Grice later came to incorporate restrictions on the admissible backgrounds.

Let us consider [Recognition] first. In order to have a reason for [Recognition], the addressee should be in a position to make an abductive inference, *i.e.*, consider $I_S(B_A(p))$ as the best available explanation for why S did x . For this purpose he should, first of all, notice that S 's action is directed to him; second, he should notice that S means to convey something by acting in this way; and, third, he should notice what specifically it is (namely: that p) that S , in doing x , wants him to come to believe. Especially concerning the third point, it is obvious that A may have completely mistaken background assumptions which nevertheless do the job of giving him rational support for [Recognition]. Here is one example. Imagine a case in which A reasons validly to a true conclusion but in which all his premises are erroneous. His reasoning is this:

An action like x is commonly performed under such circumstances only if the utterer wants his addressee to come to believe that non- p . But S is mistaken about the common use of x ; he thinks it is used to bring an addressee to come to believe that p . And he presumes that I have the same belief about the common use of x . So presumably, he uttered x intending to get me to believe that p .²⁰

In such a scenario, the addressee's so-called [*Recognition*] would be based on nothing but errors. But he would nevertheless arrive at the conclusion intended by the utterer.

As to [*Reliance*], again A 's background assumptions may be of very different kinds. In a “regular” case, A may reasonably believe that

- (r_1) If S wants me to believe that p , he himself believes that p . [*Honesty*]
- (r_2) If S believes that p , then he has reason to believe that p . [*Rationality*]
- (r_3) Whatever reasons S has for believing that p , they are good enough for me to also believe it. [*Quality*]

If A has “regular” background assumptions such as (r_1) – (r_3), we may say that he has an attitude of *bona fide* reliance towards S , at least as far as this matter (whether he should believe that p) is concerned. But his [*Reliance*] may be based on other, “irregular” background assumptions. Here is one example: In a spy story with intricate double dealing, A may have reason to believe all of the following.

- (r_1^*) If S wants me to believe that p , he himself believes that non- p .
- (r_2^*) If S believes that non- p , then he has reason to believe that non- p .
- (r_3^*) Whatever reasons S has for believing that non- p result from disinformation and hence are no good reasons for me to believe it.
- (r_4^*) S has been misinformed by people who know that p .

²⁰ Here is the sketch of an example: Let x be the act of letting out a sharp whistle. Actually it is commonly used to express approval for something which just has happened. S knows this and he knows that A thinks that x is used to express disapproval. Moreover, as S knows, A assumes (a) that S is wrong about how x is used and (b) that S , because of this error, wants him to take x straightaway as an expression of S 's approval. – In working out the details, read “ p ” here as “ S thinks highly of what he has just witnessed”.

Therefore:

[*Reliance*] If *S* wants me to believe that *p*, then *p*.

Assumptions $(r_1^*) - (r_4^*)$ give *A* reason for [*Reliance*]. In such a case *A* relies, as it were, on *S*'s erroneousousness and dishonesty. But is such twisted and distrustful *p*-reliance, if it can be called reliance at all, in the spirit of the Gricean analysis? – Maybe not.

But then again, it has to be considered that speaker's meaning, after all, is *speaker's* meaning. It just has to do with what *he* believes and intends. The specifics of the *actual* background of his addressee are of no immediate relevance whatever. All that counts is that the speaker thinks his addressee comes with some background which is suitable for his purposes. Whether the addressee's actual background is somehow odd has no bearing on whether the speaker means something by his action. The exact nature of the addressee's *actual* background, which supports [*Recognition*] and [*Reliance*], may be of crucial importance for the issue of whether he “really understands” what the speaker means. But Grice's analysis is not concerned with what constitutes understanding the speaker's meaning²¹. It is about nothing but speaker's meaning itself.

This being said, we nevertheless shouldn't simply dodge, or ignore, the intuitive difference between “normal” cases of speaker's meaning on the one hand –cases in which [*Honesty*], [*Rationality*] and [*Quality*] are presumed to be fulfilled– and an indefinitely large group of odd or even bizarre cases which are also admitted by **SM1**. Several objections against **SM1** turn on this difference, as we shall see in § 2.1.

2. Inherent Problems of the original analysis, some proposed solutions, and Grice's second analysis

A conceptual analysis is subject to various sorts of objections. The most interesting among them are: (a) that the alleged *analysandum* does not allow for an analysis at all (*e.g.*, because it is a primitive concept); (b) that concepts used in the *analysans* are not suitable (*e.g.*, because they are less clear than the concept to be analyzed, or because they are conceptually dependent on it); (c) that the *analysans* is too wide in admitting cases which clearly cannot be

²¹ There will be more about the issue of meaning and understanding. See § 4.2. below.

subsumed under the *analysandum*; and (d) that the *analysans* is too narrow in excluding cases which are clearly to be subsumed under the *analysandum*. – As to (a) and (b), there are, as far as I can see, no faintly feasible objections. The most dramatic objections against the Gricean analysis have been of kind (c), to be considered in the next section. Some doubts of type (d) have been voiced but I shall consider only one of them in section 4.2. Others concern talking to oneself, keeping a diary and suchlike matters. Since these are side-issues, albeit possibly interesting ones, I shall not address them.

2.1. Is the original *analysans* sufficient?

Although the addressee’s actual reasons for holding [*Recognition*] and [*Reliance*] are extraneous to speaker’s meaning, it turns out to be of crucial importance what the speaker takes them to be. Strawson, Stampe, Schiffer, Searle and others have presented stories in which the speaker fulfils the *analysans* of **SM1**, but does not mean_{NN} that *p*. Such counterexamples against the sufficiency of the *analysans* invariably involve additional “sneaky” speaker’s intentions (as Grice calls them), over and above the intentions listed in the *analysans*.

A hallmark of a sneaky speaker’s intention is this: The speaker can have it only if he assumes that some of the addressee’s background assumptions are mistaken. In the counterexamples developed by Strawson and Stampe, the speaker –in addition to having the three intentions listed in the original *analysans*– also intends that his addressee mistakenly believes that the speaker wants him to believe, mistakenly, that condition (2) of the *analysans* is not fulfilled, *i.e.*:

$$[4^*] I_S(B_A(I_S(B_A(\sim I_S(B_A(p))))))).$$

That is to say that *S* assumes *A* to have background assumptions which give him reason to believe that *S* wants to trick him: wants him to believe that condition (2) is not fulfilled. But this belief would be mistaken, because in fact –as is stated in (3)– the speaker wants him to recognize that (2) is fulfilled. Hence *S* wants to mislead his addressee about a certain

intention he has in making the utterance. *A fortiori* S wants to conceal, from the addressee, some aspect of what he intends to bring about with his utterance.

Correspondingly, the first counterexample presented by Schiffer involves another sneaky intention, namely

$$[5^*] I_S(B_A(\sim I_S(RB_A(I_S(B_A(p)), p))))).$$

In this counterexample, it is condition (3) of which S wants his addressee to mistakenly believe that it is not satisfied. Consequently, he wants to conceal from him the fact that (3) is satisfied.

Here's the recipe for cooking up a counterexample against any analysis which claims that a certain finite list of intentions is sufficient for speaker's meaning: Pick an intention which is on the list; let's call it i . Make sure that the list contains nothing to the effect that i is intended to be recognized. Assume that the speaker has i . But now assume furthermore that he also has the further "sneaky" intention that the addressee should mistakenly believe that he, the speaker, doesn't have i . So, in having i , the speaker wants to mislead the addressee and wants to conceal at least one of his pertinent intentions. Such an intention, then, is *sneaky*, with respect to the account in question. Now, here's the hard part of cooking up a counterexample: Invent a story which makes it somehow plausible how a rational agent may have all the intentions on the list and also the sneaky intention that the addressee believes him not to have i . If you find such a story –*nota bene*: a credible one (which is no easy thing)– it is a counterexample against the account.

But what exactly is it that makes a plausible story with a sneaky intention a counterexample to the analysis? – It's the speaker's desire to mislead his addressee about how he wants him to come to believe the proposition meant, or at least to hide from him some relevant detail about how he wants him to come to believe it. Intended deception and concealment of such a kind was generally considered as not being in accordance with speaker's meaning – not only by Grice himself, but by anyone who took part in this debate. This general agreement (concerning what constitutes a counterexample) strongly indicates that there are widespread pre-theoretical intuitions about what speaker's meaning is, and what it is not. Interestingly, these intuitions are shared by almost all of those who reject the Gricean analysis. And given this, what this analysis is about cannot, despite its complexity, be

shrugged off as a single philosopher's spawn of idiosyncratic ingenuity. There is a widespread agreement, among friends and enemies, about how to classify a novel scenario: whether it's a case of speaker's meaning or not. In the light of this, the concept of speaker's meaning appears to be one which can be, and obviously has been, grasped by many (if only implicitly), independently of Grice's analysis. There is some such phenomenon as speaker's meaning. It is not a philosophical artifact. It is an attempt at exerting a special, non-manipulative sort of influence on other people's beliefs. There is one thing, in a speaker's meaning that p , about which he wants the addressee to be fully clear: the reason he offers him for believing that p . And this seems to be at odds with certain forms of deception and concealment.

Several things are worth noting at this point. First, the deception and concealment in question do not concern the way the world is (*i.e.*, the truth value of the belief that p), but rather what reasons S wants to give A to believe that p . Someone may, of course, mean that p by his utterance although he knows that non- p . Lying about p is not the issue in these counterexamples. In telling the lie that p , the speaker does nevertheless mean, by his utterance, that p . – Second, in such cases of deception and concealment, the speaker presupposes that his addressee has mistaken background assumptions about the speaker. To put it differently, if S did not presume A to have at least one mistaken assumption about S , no counterexample of the kind under discussion would arise. – Third, what makes the examples invented by Strawson *et al.* counterexamples obviously has to do with intended motivational opacity. The moral of these counterexemplary stories seems to be this: The speaker must not try to hide from the addressee any of the steps in the process of reasoning by which he wants him to come to believe that p . So the feature of transparency, mentioned above, again plays a crucial role. The counterexamples suggest that transparency concerns not only the basic speaker's intention recorded in clause (1), but also his other intentions. Hence it appears that speaker's meaning à la Grice is to be a paragon of motivational transparency. It may even seem that any relevant speaker's intention is also intended to be transparent (or, at least, that no intention involved is intended to be hidden). – Fourth, the fact that sneaky intentions do not mesh with speaker's meaning may be seen as pointing to a kind of moral ingredient in this phenomenon and our concept of it. Whenever a speaker

means that p , he “*openly* incurs responsibility” for the addressee’s believing that p .²² And the very fact that the speaker takes on such responsibility, openly to boot, may give the addressee another reason to believe that p ; in some cases this may even be his main reason.²³

2.2. How to deal with these objections?

Many suggestions have been made as to how to deal with counterexamples of this kind. I shall mention five of them.

#1. The first idea was just to add, whenever the need arose, further “frank” intentions, *i.e.*, intentions to the effect that other intentions be recognized. Need arises as soon as a counterexample has been found. In order to block the two counterexamples just mentioned, two more frank intentions should be added to the *analysans*, namely

$$[4] I_S(B_A(I_S(B_A(I_S(B_A(p)))))))$$

and

$$[5] I_S(B_A(I_S(RB_A(I_S(B_A(p)), p))))).$$

They rule out the two counterexamples mentioned above. For given S ’s rationality, [4] is incompatible with [4*], as [5] is with [5*]. – But when Schiffer presented a counterexample even to the enriched *analysans*, comprising [1] – [5], the general feeling was that this method (of adding further intentions, one by one, whenever a counterexample is produced) is hopeless. It would be nothing but a way of *ad hoc*ing around.²⁴

#2. A second, more thoroughgoing solution was suggested by Schiffer. It amounts, in effect (but not in the letter) to require the speaker to have infinitely many frank intentions. The conditions in the *analysans* should not only comprise what has already been reached, namely

²² Dennis Stampe (2004: 7).

²³ If this is on the right track, a seventh feature of speaker’s meaning, a feature concerning ‘morality’, should be added to those listed in § 1.6. above.

²⁴ According to Stampe (2004) requiring [4] is not a mere *ad hoc* manoeuvre for dealing with counterexemplary scenarios. He argues that this intention reflects a genuine communicative purpose in the speaker’s attempt to launch the Gricean Mechanism. In contrast, it is highly doubtful whether the introduction of [5], or even further intentions, into the analysis can be substantially justified as well.

- [1] $I_S(B_A(p))$
- [2] $I_S(B_A(I_S(B_A(p))))$
- [4] $I_S(B_A(I_S(B_A(I_S(B_A(p))))))$,

and

- [3] $I_S[RB_A(I_S(B_A(p)),p)]$
- [5] $I_S(B_A(I_S[RB_A(I_S(B_A(p)),p)]))$,

but also every clause which results from putting another “ $I_S(B_A(---))$ ”-operator in front of any sentence on this list. In fairness to Schiffer, let me add that his proposal is not to ascribe to the speaker this infinite set of intentions, but just one superabundant intention of infinite complexity.²⁵ Schiffer’s account may be seen as an elaboration of the idea that in cases of meaning_{NN} every intention involved must be intended to be recognized.

The drawback of this solution, whichever way it is spelled out in detail,²⁶ is that speaker’s meaning seems to become impossible, or at least impossible for human beings with finite mental capacities. Doing something with infinitely many specific intentions, or an infinitely complex intention, just appears to be a superhuman feat.

#3. Harman, with emphasis, and Putnam, in a rather parenthetical manner, have envisaged another way out – one which is even more extreme than the second.²⁷ In the light of this third suggestion, a completely different lesson would have to be learnt from the counterexamples: namely not to increase the number of intentions but to reduce them to just one. The one speaker’s intention, supposedly sufficient for speaker’s meaning, may be characterized thus: as the intention that the addressee should come to believe that p in virtue of his recognition of this very intention itself. – The drawback of this suggestion is obvious. It is not clear whether the notion of a self-referential intention is intelligible at all. Grice

²⁵ Cf. Schiffer (1972: 39). Two pages later he adds that the very intention postulated by him need not commit S to having an infinite number of intentions, “since one may intend *all* the consequences of one’s act without intending *each* consequence”.

²⁶ See also Georg Meggle (1981: 198 ff.) who pointedly insists on postulating an infinity of speaker’s intentions. He does so by requiring them to be “absolutely open”, in a technical sense which is given by a suitable recursive definition. – It should be noted that Meggle is somewhat suspicious of the concept of speaker’s meaning, which he considers ambiguous, misleading and vague. Taking up a suggestion of Strawson’s (1964: 387), his own official target concept is *trying to communicate* – which however is most closely related to *speaker’s meaning*.

²⁷ Cf. Harman (1974: 225), Harman (2006), and Hilary Putnam (1975: 284).

seems not to have taken seriously this loophole; already in his original paper from 1957 he had insisted that his analysis does not involve a “reflexive paradox” (Grice 1989: 219).

#4. A fourth attempt at a solution has been envisaged briefly by Grice,²⁸ and elaborated more fully by Bennett and by Kemmerling.²⁹ The idea is to retain the three intentions mentioned in the original analysis and not to add any other, but instead to require the speaker *not* to have any of an infinitude of possibly sneaky intentions – *i.e.*, intentions to hide anything relevant from the addressee or even to mislead him about it. This proposal is more in line with the slogan *nothing must be intended to be hidden* than with the one on which #2 is based: that *everything must be intended to be out in the open*. In one way of spelling out this more moderate solution, it amounts to this: Add to the original analysis some clause which generates two infinite “negative” sequences; the first being

- $$\begin{aligned}
 [4^+] & \sim I_S(\sim B_A(I_S(B_A(I_S(B_A(p)))))) \\
 [4^{++}] & \sim I_S(\sim B_A(I_S(B_A(I_S(B_A(I_S(B_A(p)))))))) \\
 [4^{+++}] & \sim I_S(\sim B_A(I_S(B_A(I_S(B_A(I_S(B_A(I_S(B_A(p)))))))))) \\
 & \text{etc.}
 \end{aligned}$$

the second

- $$\begin{aligned}
 [5^+] & \sim I_S(\sim B_A(I_{S_L}(RB_A(I_S(B_A(p)),p)))) \\
 [5^{++}] & \sim I_S(\sim B_A(I_S(B_A(I_{S_L}(RB_A(I_S(B_A(p)),p)))))) \\
 [5^{+++}] & \sim I_S(\sim B_A(I_S(B_A(I_S(B_A(I_{S_L}(RB_A(I_S(B_A(p)),p)))))))) \\
 & \text{etc.}
 \end{aligned}$$

[4⁺] rules out any counterexample based on [4*], [5⁺] rules out [5*], and the others rule out any sneaky intention which might constitute counterexamples of an even higher level of intricacy than the ones which have been considered here.

Grice himself discusses all these proposals, except the third – which, as I’ve just mentioned, he seems to have dismissed already before anyone had actually proposed it. In a paper from 1972 (1989: 300 ff.) he suggests a fifth way of dealing with the counterexamples:

²⁸ In his 1969 paper “Utterer’s Meaning and Intention” (Grice 1989: 99–100).

²⁹ Cf. Bennett (1976: 127) and Kemmerling (1980: 335 ff.).

#5. The idea is now that the notion of speaker's meaning marks an optimum which cannot actually be realized but which is desirable nevertheless. In an ideally optimal case of communication the utterer would have all the infinitely many intentions which the second solution has in store for him. But this ideal cannot be realized, as everybody knows. Hence, fully strictly speaking, no-one ever, in making an utterance, means that *p*. Nevertheless, an utterer often can be properly said to do so. This is so, whenever we are justified in applying to him the phrase (*i.e.*, "means that *p*") non-strictly. As an analogy for what he has in mind, Grice refers to how we apply the word "circular" to material items. Of course, nothing in the physical world is strictly speaking circular. But if a thing approximates the ideal to a sufficiently high degree, we are justified in deeming it to be circular. – Now what constitutes justification for deeming an utterance to be a case of speaker's meaning? In his hints at an answer to this question, Grice harks back to proposal #4. If the speaker has the intentions listed in the original *analysans*, but no intention which is excluded by the fourth proposal, then we are justified in deeming his utterance a case of speaker's meaning; otherwise we are not (or are even justified in rejecting such a deeming – Grice isn't explicit on this point).

This fifth proposal looks like an attempt to get the best out of #2 and #4, two proposals which at first glance seem to point in opposite directions. The salient weakness of #2, the humanly impossible requirement it makes, is avoided by re-interpreting it as an ideal optimum beyond realizability. The weakness Grice finds in #4 is that the mere ban of certain intentions leaves it unexplained why they are not in accord with speaker's meaning. But if the presence of any of these prohibited intentions is a feature which (even in a case in which the original *analysans* is fulfilled) renders it unjustified to count the action in question as an approximation to the ideal optimum of speaker's meaning, then this fact (so Grice seems to reason) explains why their absence ought to be required in the analysis.³⁰

³⁰ J. Robert Thompson argues that none of the sneaky-intention cases forms a counterexample at all and that Grice has it exactly right with solution #5 (Thompson 2008).

2.3. “Meaning something by uttering a sentence” vs “meaning something by the sentence uttered”

Grice considers an alleged counterexample presented by Searle as showing that the original analysis needs to be enriched in another respect.³¹ It has to do with what was dubbed [*Recognition*] in § 1.7. above, that is with the question exactly how the speaker intends his addressee to recognize what he means by his utterance. Grice now requires the utterer to have in mind a certain feature, *f*, of his utterance such that the addressee takes *f* to be correlated in some manner, *c*, with the belief that *p*. Roughly speaking, *f* should help the addressee to notice that it is the belief that *p* which *S* wants him to acquire; and *f* should serve this purpose because (the addressee thinks that) *f* is correlated in some way –e.g. in virtue of conventions or perceptual resemblance– to the belief that *p*. Here is an example: During a telephone conversation, *S* says “Yesterday, it was raining over here”, meaning by his utterance that it was raining in *S*’s vicinity yesterday. Standardly, in such a case he will intend his addressee to think that the utterance has the feature of being the production of an English sentence, and that this sentence is conventionally correlated to the belief that it was raining in *S*’s vicinity at the day before the utterance. Another example will focus on a different mode of correlation: *S*, in reaction to *A*’s question about what *S* gave to Peter as a birthday present, hands *A* a drawing which shows a corkscrew, and he intends *A* to recognize that his utterance has the feature of being an act of displaying a picture which shows a corkscrew, and he wants *A* to think that, in these circumstances, this feature is correlated, in virtue of being a pictorial representation, with the belief that *S* gave Peter a corkscrew as a birthday present. It is worth noting again that the crucial point here is not whether the utterance really has the feature in question, or whether there really exists such a correlation, or whether *S* himself believes this to be the case. All that matters is that *S* intends *A* to think so (and furthermore that *S* intends *A* to recognize that *S* intends him to think so).

Grice makes this addition in order to account for cases in which the speaker, in uttering a sentence, means that *p*, but does not mean that *p* by the sentence he utters. To illustrate: If *S* knows that *A* confuses the words “frog” and “toad”, he may say to *A* “There is a frog in my kitchen”, thereby trying to produce in *A* the belief that there is a toad in his

³¹ Cf. Searle (1969: 44–45).

kitchen. In this case, S knows that A mistakenly assumes a conventional correlation between the sentence uttered and the belief in question, and he takes A 's error into account when he chooses his words. But although it is true, then, that by uttering these words he meant that there was a toad in his kitchen, he did not mean this by the words which he uttered.

2.4. Is the original *anabysans* necessary?

There are many cases in which someone means that p , but does not try to produce the belief that p in his addressee. Sometimes we say that p (and mean it), just to remind the addressee of the fact that p , or to let him know that we know. In such cases (and others), the first clause of the original *anabysans* already puts too strong a condition on meaning. In order to remove this inadequacy, Grice proposes the following modification: It is no longer required, for each and every case of meaning that p , that the speaker intends his addressee to come to believe that p . What is required instead, for all cases of speaker's meaning, is that the speaker wants the addressee to come to believe that he, the speaker, believes that p . If we disregard the other revisions already mentioned and simply return to the original *anabysans*, its first clause

$$[1] I_S(B_A(p))$$

would have to be replaced by the new

$$[1^{new}] I_S(B_A(B_S(p))).$$

Corresponding changes would have to be made with regard to [2] and [3].

If [1^{new}] applies, but the speaker does not intend the addressee to acquire the belief that p , Grice calls his utterance *exhibitive*. If the speaker has the further aim of making A come to believe that p –and to acquire this belief *via* his recognition of the fulfillment of [1^{new}]–, then his utterance is a *protreptic* one (from Greek “*protrépō*”: urge somebody on). This distinction suggests the following diagnosis of what went wrong in **SM1**. The original analysis has been too narrow because its focus was exclusively on those cases of speaker's meaning in which the utterance is protreptic. The *anabysandum* failed to cover utterances which are merely exhibitive.

2.5. The original analysis revised

Here is a sketch of what the envisaged revisions may (be taken to) amount to. It really is only a sketch, because several further complications Grice considers are left out, *e.g.*, those which have to do with cases of speaker's meaning in which the speaker's primary intention is to get the addressee to *act* in a particular way (or at least to get him to believe that this is his intention), and those cases in which the speaker means something when no addressee is present.

SM2	In uttering x towards his addressee A , S means _{NN} that p if and only if there is feature f of x and a mode of correlation c such that S utters x (1) intending A to believe that x has f , (2) intending A to believe that f is correlated in way c with believing that p , (3) intending A to believe that S believes that p , and (4) intending A 's belief that x is (via c) correlated with the belief that p to be a reason for A to believe that S believes that p In case x is a protreptic utterance, S moreover (5) intends A to believe that p , (6) intends A 's belief that S believes that p to be a reason for A to believe that p , and (7) S has no sneaky intention (of whatever level of complexity) concerning all this.
------------	---

In this second analysis, two aspects of speaker's meaning become more conspicuous; they have to do with honesty and transparency. (3') expressly requires the speaker to want to be taken to be honest, at least with regard to the proposition that p . (7') secures that he does not try to conceal anything about the specific way in which the Gricean Mechanism is supposed to work in this particular case. Hence twisted and distrustful reliance, which was compatible at least with the letter of the first analysis,³² is ruled out by the second. – In the light of this it may be said that the second analysis brings something to the fore which has, at

³² See § 1.7. above.

most, been merely implied by the original analysis: namely, that the speaker presumes an overall atmosphere of a certain sort of cognitive congeniality or harmony. Or, a bit more specifically, that he presumes his addressee to meet him with a trusting receptiveness for doxastic influence.

Countless revisions of the Gricean analysis have been proposed in the secondary literature. Moreover, many new analyses of the concept of speaker's meaning have been propounded which are not just revisions but nevertheless in a decidedly Gricean spirit. For extensive surveys and critical discussion see Vlach (1981) and Davis (1992).

3. Speaker's meaning and the wider Gricean program

For Grice, the analysis of speaker's meaning is not an isolated piece of conceptual clarification. It is meant to serve as the basis of, and core for, a major project, namely to ground linguistic meaning (the meaning of sentences and words of natural languages) in a characteristic sort of human action. This makes his larger project one variant of so-called use-theories of meaning. In most use-theoretic accounts, from Wittgenstein to David Lewis, rule-following or conventionalized behaviour is considered to be the distinctive feature of what is constitutive of linguistic meaning. In contrast, according to Grice's account, it is intentions of a special sort which are the mark of those actions which are constitutive of linguistic meaning. Of course, Grice does not deny that linguistic meaning is conventional. Where there is, *e.g.*, sentence-meaning, there are conventions. But what exactly is conventionalized here? Grice's suggestion is: it is speaker's meaning. To say that the meaning of a sentence (*e.g.*, the German sentence "Es regnet") is conventional is, for Grice, to say that the sentence has a standard use – in this case, the sentence is conventionally used to mean, by uttering it, that it's raining. So, roughly speaking, linguistic meaning is conventionalized speaker's meaning. But the crucial point, for Grice, is this: Linguistic conventions do not create meaning out of sheer meaninglessness, rather they standardize an independently available sort of meaning – namely speaker's meaning.³³

³³ It should be noted that there is no substantial conflict between Lewis's analysis of conventional meaning and an approach à la Grice. Roughly speaking, conventional meaning à la Lewis forms a subcategory of speaker's meaning. See Lewis (1969: 154 ff.). – The question how conventions of language are best to be construed is of minor importance. Lewis characterizes them as conventions of truthfulness; Schiffer (1972: 163–164), maybe

The wider program, as sketched by Grice in various works, is in itself of considerable complexity and full of intricate details. It not only aims at revealing a reductive path from sentence-meaning, by various steps of intermediate conceptual analyses, to speaker's meaning. With regard to what a speaker means by uttering a *sentence*, Grice moreover wants to separate two components: (a) what the speaker *says*, and (b) what he *implicates* by saying what he says and how he says it. As used by Grice, "say" and "implicate" are semi-technical terms. The former has to do with explicitly committing oneself to the truth of a more or less definite claim, the latter with suggesting, implying or engaging in other forms of "low commitment" (Grice 1989: 368). – The wider program (*i.e.*, to produce a sequence of reductive analyses, starting with linguistic meaning and terminating in speaker's meaning) has never been executed in detail, and seems to have been given up by anyone who has seriously tried to do so. Yet one part of this program –the part which focuses on separating, within the totality of what a speaker means by uttering a sentence, two components: *what is said* and *what is implicated*– has proved to be inspiring, to this day, for many linguists and philosophers of language who try to clarify the notion of literal meaning, or to delineate the so-called semantics of a language from the so-called pragmatics.

The Gricean program is not in the centre of this contribution. Its minutiae are, again, highly intricate. Grice's remarks are highly provisional, often nothing but hints, dispersed with semi-technicalities. So a very rough sketch of the bare outlines must do. In his 1968 paper Grice describes his program as a progression of six stages.³⁴ The first and second comprise what just has been presented above: a specification of the natural/nonnatural distinction and an analysis of speaker's meaning. At its third stage, the program enters the realm of conventional meaning. Put somewhat technically, the *analysandum* now is

In language *L*, the timeless conventional meaning of utterance-type *X* (*e.g.*, a sentence or a word) is "...".

following a hint of Grice (1989: 220), characterizes them in a more Gricean fashion: as conventions about what to mean_{NN} by uttering a given sentence.

³⁴ Grice (1989: 117–137).

Given that many words, phrases and sentences of natural languages have more than one conventional meaning, an analysis has to be given, moreover, of the *applied* timeless meaning of an utterance type:

At the occasion at which *S* uttered a token of *X*, *X* meant "...".

The notion of applied timeless meaning of an utterance-*type* is not the same as the notion of what the speaker means by uttering a token of the type. So an independent analysis is required. In standard language use, applied timeless meaning and speaker's meaning often coincide. In such cases both

At occasion *o* *S* uttered a token, *x*, of *X*, and *X* (the type) at *o* meant "*p*"

and

By uttering *x* (a token of type *X*) at *o*, *S* meant that *p*

are true (for the same values of the schematic letters). Grice's term for this sort of coincidence is *conventional speaker's meaning* ("By uttering *x* at *o*, *S* conventionally meant that *p*"). Intuitively, it seems to suggest itself that in such a case it is also true that

By uttering *x* at *o*, *S* said that *p*.

But for reasons which have to do with his theory of implicature, Grice prefers not to identify the notion of saying with the notion of conventional speaker's meaning.

The ensuing last two stages of the program concern details of how to delineate what is said by an utterance from what is conventionally meant by it. In his account of the distinction between what the speaker implicates and what he says, Grice uses the phrase "what is said" in a somewhat idiosyncratic sense. He concedes that this sense may be in some degree artificial. It clearly is in need of elucidation. He seems to assume that such an elucidation would come to the fore at a more mature level of elaboration of the program. – So, although the program is primarily designed to reveal "how the meanings of words may be connected with the meanings of speakers" (1989: 117), it is at the same time "directed

toward an explication of the favored sense of “say” and a clarification of its relation to the notion of conventional meaning” (1989: 118).

3.1. Meaning-nominalism, reductive conceptual analysis, and semantic reductionism

Grice’s wider program aims at reducing central concepts of linguistic meaning to the concept of speaker’s meaning – which in turn is claimed to be analyzable in terms of psychological concepts like intention and belief, and other concepts (like reason to believe). What makes these psychological concepts attractive, in this context, is this: They are not, at least they do not smack of being, semantic notions. So the wider program can be seen as, and has often been called, an attempt to reduce semantics to psychology.

The wider program has been welcomed by many meaning-nominalists.³⁵ According to meaning-nominalism, first, not all meaning is linguistic, second, not all meaning is conventional, third, the concept of conventional meaning can be elucidated in terms of that of a more basic kind of meaning, and fourth, this more basic kind of meaning can be analyzed without bringing in the concepts of convention or language. Grice’s wider program suggests one way of carrying out the meaning-nominalist strategy: to explicate the concept of linguistic meaning through concepts of meaning and convention which themselves are not conceptually dependent on anything essentially linguistic.

Moreover, some philosophers welcomed the wider program because of its alleged naturalist, or even physicalist, potential.³⁶ The gist of their undoubtedly more subtle reasonings may be crudely characterized along the following lines: “Now that it can be seen, thanks to Grice, how semantics is reducible to psychology, the way is paved for further reductive steps, eventually down to physics. So let’s move on. Let’s try to show how psychology reduces to biology, biology to chemistry, and, in the final analysis, to physics.”³⁷ The desire for such a step by step reduction down to physics may be fuelled by the feeling that the concepts reached at a lower level should be somehow “better” (somehow more respectable) than those which are characteristic of the upper levels. Standard scientism in

³⁵ See for example Jonathan Bennett (1973).

³⁶ See for example Brian Loar (1981) and Stephen Schiffer (1982).

³⁷ This is not meant as a malicious caricature, but rather as a crude simplification. At least I myself was tempted to think this way some time ago.

philosophy seems to be inspired, in part, by this sort of reductionist sentiment: as we get closer and closer to the most fundamental science, our theoretical situation gets better and better, at least with respect to our ontological commitments.

Grice does not share this attitude. He accepts, of course, that nonnatural meaning is not “an original feature of items in the world” (Grice 1989: 350), that it is dependent on what people do, on how and why they do it. A *reductive analysis* of the concept of meaning aims at specifying what exactly these dependencies are. This aim is pursued by Grice. But he is not inclined to accept any kind of semantic *reductionism* based on the idea that something is amiss about our common notions of meaning, that they somehow lack a kind of conceptual dignity which terms of “deeper” sciences enjoy (Grice 1989: 351).

4. Further criticisms of Grice’s analysis of speaker’s meaning

Beyond the objections discussed above (§§ 2.1. and 2.4.), the Gricean analysis of speaker’s meaning has been widely and vigorously criticized. Most objections are tied up with the question whether speaker’s meaning, as analyzed by Grice, is an appropriate starting point for a theory of linguistic meaning. Here are two examples: It has been claimed that speaker’s meaning is dependent on language, in some way or other. But even if this hard-to-believe claim could be supported, the Gricean analysis itself would stand unrefuted. It is silent about this topic. Second example: It has been argued that if a speaker utters a *sentence* (or some other item with an established conventional meaning) and means what he says, then normally he just does not have the intentions postulated in the Gricean *analysans*. So if the situation is normal, a speaker may mean something in uttering a sentence, without having those intentions. As a matter of fact (the objection goes), such intentions are irrelevant and unlikely in normal cases; and what is more, the fact that the speaker does not have such intentions is no reason to doubt that he acts fully rationally.³⁸ Again, these interesting claims do not contradict the Gricean analysis of speaker’s meaning itself. Rather they raise an objection against the analysis of conventional speaker’s meaning, which is part of the wider program.

³⁸ Eike von Savigny (1988: 89 ff.).

Such mixed objections are not addressed here. In the next section I shall consider only two objections which are directed against the analysis itself.

4.1. Psychological implausibility

One obvious misgiving about the Gricean analysis is the sheer complexity of the *analysans*. Many people find it hard to believe that meaning something by an utterance should be such a demanding thing, involving highly complex intentional states. In the light of **SM2** and many of the scenarios discussed in the literature, it may seem that the speaker would have to assume that his addressee, in order to understand his meaning, has to go through a series of complicated inferential steps. Such an assumption may be needed, if the speaker finds himself in a very special, abnormally difficult case of communication. But as speakers in a standard situation of communication we do not find ourselves involved in intricate reasonings about our addressees' uptake. We ourselves sense no intellectual effort in such cases, and we don't assume it on the part of our addressees. So the Gricean *analysans* seems to be at odds with the ease which is characteristic of some of our most familiar forms of communication. In the Gricean analysis, speaker's meaning seems to get over-intellectualized, up to the point of blatant psychological implausibility.

This misgiving would point to a serious objection, if the analysis of speaker's meaning aimed at capturing what goes on in the speaker's mind when he performs his utterance. But the Gricean analysis is not at all designed to reveal the conscious reasoning, if any, which the speaker goes through. It is not a contribution to the psychology or phenomenology of meaning but rather an attempt to lay bare the pattern of rationality underlying, or "justifying", what he does. How could he rationally expect to succeed in bringing about what he wants by doing what he does? What sort of practical reasoning would make reasonable his act of making the very utterance he makes? It is this kind of questions which Grice tries to answer. A person's reasons for acting as he does (*e.g.*, for making a certain utterance) are fixed by his relevant beliefs, desires and other intentional states.³⁹ Such states play their justificatory role whether or not the agent is aware of them in

³⁹ For an attempt to reformulate the original Gricean analysis exclusively in terms of the speaker's beliefs and desires, and to show how the Gricean intentions can be derived from these *cf.* Kemmerling (1986: 148–154).

performing his action. Hence the Gricean *analysans* does not entail –and must not even be taken to suggest– that the speaker actually deliberates. For “actions done without deliberation are often done with definite intentions”.⁴⁰

4.2. The speaker’s primary intention: belief or understanding?

Peter F. Strawson was the first to suggest that appropriate consideration of speaker’s meaning may be resourceful for improving the so-called speech act theory as kicked off, at about the same time, by J. L. Austin.⁴¹ Strawson greets the Gricean analysis as a tool for clarifying the nature of illocutionary acts and, more specifically, of the intentions in performing them. But one aspect of Grice’s analysis, he holds, would need to be modified. This one point concerns the content of the speaker’s primary intention. Whereas Grice has it that the speaker primarily aims at producing a certain *belief* in his addressee, Strawson proposes that the speaker’s primary intention be that the addressee *understand* the illocutionary act performed by the utterance. “The illocutionary force of an utterance is essentially something that is intended to be understood”, he says and calls this a common element in all illocutionary acts. But having such an intention, of producing illocutionary understanding, is not necessarily accompanied by an intention “to secure a definite response or reaction in an audience over and above that which is necessarily secured if the illocutionary force of the utterance is understood”.⁴² As Searle put it a few years later: “the [intended] “effect” on the hearer is not a belief . . ., it consists merely in the hearer understanding the utterance of the speaker”.⁴³

The point at issue is not completely clear.⁴⁴ It could concern either (a) the Gricean analysis itself or (b) the consignment of Gricean insights into the theory of speech acts. As to the first issue, it is crucial to appreciate the broad range of the Gricean analysis. Its *analysandum* is meant to comprise each and every case of an agent’s meaning_{NN} something in

⁴⁰ See David Lewis (1969: 155).

⁴¹ Peter Strawson (1964).

⁴² Peter Strawson (1964: 168).

⁴³ John Searle (1969: 47). Addition in square brackets mine.

⁴⁴ It seems that even Grice finds it hard to see what exactly is supposed to be the point. See Paul Grice (1989: 351–352). – It is not clear, however, that either Strawson or Searle mean to raise an objection against the very analysis of speaker’s meaning.

doing something. The analysis is in no way restricted to the performance of illocutionary acts. Of course it might be claimed that each case of speaker's meaning is, *eo ipso*, the performance of some illocutionary act or other. But such a sweeping claim would stand in need of an argument which neither Strawson nor Searle have undertaken. Hence, as to (a), it is not clear that there is really an objection against the analysis and what exactly it would come to.

On the other hand, if (b) captures the sole concern of Strawson and Searle, then the question amounts to this: Is the Gricean analysis in need of a modification, in case one would like to apply it to the special purposes of speech act theory? The alleged modification would be one about a speaker's so-called illocutionary intention. Does the speaker primarily aim at inducing some particular belief in the addressee (is he trying to "persuade" him, in the sense of this word in ancient rhetorics)? Or does he, in performing an illocutionary act, primarily aim at getting the addressee to understand the utterance, or at least the illocutionary aspect of it? (A speaker who claims that p doesn't necessarily have to intend his audience to come to believe that p ; yet in a normal case, S has to intend A to understand that he is claiming that p .)

But then again, is a modification really needed, if only for this purpose? For it is not clear that there is a contrast at all between trying to produce a belief in the addressee and trying to make him understand. Let's assume for a moment that understanding an utterance is coming to believe (correctly) that the very utterance is the performance of a certain illocutionary act. Given such an assumption, no modification at all is needed, for Strawson's and Searle's suggestion would amount to:

(1*) In uttering x , S intends A to believe that x is S 's performance of $\langle I, p \rangle$,

where $\langle I, p \rangle$ is some illocutionary act (like stating that p or promising that p). But (1*) is exactly what results from the primary intention of the Gricean analysis,

(1) In uttering x , S intends A to believe that p ,

when " p " is substituted by " x is S 's performance of $\langle I, p \rangle$ ". So this alleged modification is in full accord with, in fact it is just another special instance of, the original analysis. – Certainly,

the assumption just made (that illocutionary understanding is forming a certain sort of beliefs) can be contested. But since it is not obviously mistaken, it is not clear at all that a modification of the Gricean analysis is required when one wants to explain the nature of illocutionary intentions.

Moreover, it may be argued that the intention to make the addressee understand, or a close kinsman of such an intention, was from the very beginning part and parcel of the analysis. Consider again the intention that the addressee recognize in what way he is intended to react to the utterance, and that he is intended to react in this way specifically because he recognizes this. Grice seems to think that this comes close to saying that the addressee is intended to understand and furthermore to react, because of his understanding, in a particular way (1989: 352).

But if the construal of understanding as believing (or recognition of intention) is not accepted, then the question arises: what alternative analysis of understanding can be offered? This question needs to be answered before it can be decided whether the concept of understanding is to be allowed to play a role in the *analyses*. For these two concepts, meaning and understanding, are extremely closely tied to one another. Hence, in view of the risk of circularity, understanding cannot be simply accepted as an unanalyzed concept in an explication of meaning. Therefore, those who think that the Gricean analysis is in need of the modification suggested would have to provide a suitable rival analysis of understanding.

5. Applications of Grice's analysis of speaker's meaning

As has become clear in the previous section, Gricean ideas about speaker's meaning have been influential in speech act theory. Many speech act theorists have felt inspired to incorporate, in some way or other, some complex intention à la Grice into their theories.⁴⁵ Others have also employed a core aspect of the Gricean Mechanism (namely, that recognition of desire leads to fulfillment of desire) for characterizing the generic nature of all illocutionary acts, for demarcating them from all other sorts of actions.⁴⁶ Whereas such free-and-easy allusions to, and exploitations of, Gricean ideas are common in recent speech act

⁴⁵ Cf. for example Searle (1969: 42–50) and Bach and Harnish (1979: 12–16).

⁴⁶ See Andreas Kemmerling (2001).

theory, Schiffer's account of the locutionary and illocutionary act seems to be the only one which is genuinely built on speaker's meaning proper.⁴⁷

The same holds for other areas in the philosophy of language. Generally speaking, the letter of the Gricean analysis itself is treated nonchalantly, but its spirit is influential. The theory of reference is one example.⁴⁸ Particularly in attempts to come to terms with Donnellan's distinction between the "attributive" and the "referential" use of definite descriptions, many have found it helpful to distinguish between "semantic reference" and "speaker's reference", and to draw this distinction in ways which pay tribute to Grice's distinction between the applied timeless meaning of an utterance type and speaker's (occasion-) meaning.⁴⁹

Applications outside the philosophy of language are beyond the limits of this contribution. One, I think, deserves mentioning. Thomas Nagel has observed that the Gricean mechanism is at work in certain more refined forms of sexual arousal.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ See Stephen Schiffer (1972: chapter 4).

⁴⁸ See Aloysius Martinich (1984: chapter 9).

⁴⁹ Most notably Saul Kripke (1977).

⁵⁰ Thomas Nagel (1979: 47).

References

- Austin, J. L. 1975 *How to do Things with Words*,² Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP
- Bach, Kent and Harnish, Robert M. 1979 *Linguistic Communication and Speech Acts*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP
- Bennett, Jonathan 1973 The meaning-nominalist strategy. *Foundations of Language* 10: 141–168.
- Bennett, Jonathan 1976 *Linguistic Behaviour*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP
- Chapman, Siobhan 2005 *Paul Grice: Philosopher and Linguist*, Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Davis, Steven 1998 Grice on natural and non-natural meaning. *Philosophia* 26: 405–419.
- Davis, Wayne 1992 Speaker Meaning. *Linguistics and Philosophy* 15: 223–253
- Grice, Paul 1989 *Studies in the Ways of Words*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP
- Harman, Gilbert 1974 Stephen R. Schiffer “Meaning”. *Journal of Philosophy* 71: 224–229.
- Harman, Gilbert 2006 Self-Reflexive Thoughts. *Noûs-Supplement* 16: 334–345.
- Kemmerling, Andreas 1980 How Many Things Must a Speaker Intend/Before He is Said to Have Meant? *Erkenntnis* 15: 333–341.
- Kemmerling, Andreas 1986 Utterer’s Meaning Revisited. In: Richard E. Grandy/ Richard Warner (eds.), *Philosophical Grounds of Rationality: Intentions, Categories, Ends*, 131–155. Oxford: Oxford UP.
- Kemmerling, Andreas 2001 Gricy Actions. In: Giovanna Cosenza (ed.), *Paul Grice’s Heritage*, 69–95. Turnhout: Brepols.
- Kripke, Saul 1977 Speaker’s reference and semantic reference. *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 2: 255–276.
- Lewis, C. S. 1960 *Studies in Words*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lewis, David 1969 *Convention: A Philosophical Study*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Loar, Brian 1981 *Mind and Meaning*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Martinich, Aloysius P. 1984 *Communication and Reference*, Berlin/New York: de Gruyter

- Meggle, Georg 1981 *Grundbegriffe der Kommunikation*, Berlin/New York: de Gruyter.
- Nagel, Thomas 1979 *Mortal Questions*, Cambridge (Eng.)/New York: Cambridge UP
- Putnam, Hilary 1975 *Mind, Language and Reality*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP.
- Savigny, Eike von 1988 *The social foundations of meaning*, Berlin/Heidelberg: Springer.
- Schiffer, Stephen 1972 *Meaning*, Oxford: Oxford UP.
- Schiffer, Stephen 1982 Intention-Based Semantics: *Notre Dame Journal of Formal Logic* 23: 119–156.
- Searle, John 1969 *Speech Acts*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP 1969.
- Stampe, Dennis 2004 Why Grice's analysis is not regressive: speaker's meaning and the open incurrance of responsibility. [Unpublished type-script]
- Strawson, Peter Frederick 1964 Intention and Convention in Speech Acts, *Philosophical Review* 73: quoted after the reprint in his *Logico-Linguistic Papers*. London 1971: Methuen: 149–169.
- Thompson, J. Robert 2008 Grades of meaning. *Synthese* 161: 283–308.
- Vlach, Frank 1981 Speaker's meaning. *Linguistics and Philosophy* 4: 359–391