Saying, Meaning, and Implicating

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> Sydney Morgenbesser, on being a philosopher:
> *You make a few distinctions. You clarify a few concepts. It's a living.*

A speaker can say something without meaning it, by meaning something else or perhaps nothing at all. A speaker can mean something without saying it, by merely implicating it. These two truisms are reason enough to distinguish saying, meaning, and implicating. And that's what we'll do here, looking into what each involves and how they interconnect. The aim of this chapter is to clarify the notions of saying, meaning, and implicating and, with the help of some other distinctions, to dispel certain common misunderstandings.

Paul Grice famously developed accounts of what it is for a speaker to mean something and to implicate something. His basic idea was not new, as this oft-quoted passage from Mill illustrates:

> If I say to any one, 'I saw some of your children today', he might be justified in inferring that I did not see them all, not because the words mean it, but because, if I had seen them all, it is most likely that I should have said so: even though this cannot be presumed unless it is presupposed that I must have known whether the children I saw were all or not. (Mill 1867: 501)

Not only did Mill appreciate the phenomenon of what, thanks to Grice, has come to be known as *conversational implicature,* in this passage Mill points to the importance of distinguishing what is meant by the words a speaker utters and what a speaker means in uttering them. This is perhaps the distinction most basic to pragmatics.

So we have the distinction between linguistic and speaker's meaning, as well as the three-part distinction between saying, meaning, and implicating, as done by a speaker. Why fuss over these

distinctions? The main reason is to identify the sorts of information that speakers (or writers) make available to their listeners (or readers), the sorts of intentions that speakers have in so doing, and the means by which this information is made available to or is inferable by the hearer from the fact that the speaker did what she did. We do not use psychokinesis to make ourselves understood or telepathy to figure out what others mean. We rely primarily on the meanings of the words we utter or hear. They carry information and we, as speakers of the same language, share this information and mutually presume that we share it. But we do not rely solely on linguistically encoded information. In communicating to and understanding one another, we rely also on general background information and on specific information about the situation in which the utterance is taking place. Importantly, this includes the very fact that the utterance, *that* utterance, is being made. As speakers aiming to communicate things, we choose to utter bits of language that make our communicative intentions evident to our hearers. We do so with the tacit expectation that the package of linguistic and extralinguistic information associated with our utterance will enable our listeners to figure out what we mean. Correlatively, as hearers, we rely on what we presume to be the very same information, both linguistic and extralinguistic, to figure out what the speaker means.

In the first three sections we will take up saying, meaning, and implicating, respectively. Our initial discussion of saying will be brief, serving mainly to explain how saying, in the sense tied to linguistic meaning, contrasts with (speaker) meaning and implicating. The discussion of speaker meaning will focus on its two main features, one due to Grice and one due to his critics. Grice's ingenious idea was that in meaning something a speaker has a special sort of hearer-directed intention, which he sometimes called a *reflexive* intention, because part of its content is that the hearer recognize this very intention. She succeeds in communicating if he does recognize it (from now on, when using pronouns for a pair of interlocutors, I will use 'she' for the *s*peaker and 'he' for the *h*earer). As for implicating, it is a case of meaning something without saying it. Grice proposed an extraordinarily influential account of how this works, at least when communication succeeds and the conversational implicature is recognized, by proposing a *Cooperative Principle* and certain *conversational maxims* subordinate to it.

Grice's account, as influential as it has been, has also been widely misunderstood and even misrepresented. In section 4 we will identify the main misconceptions and thereby clarify just what he was claiming or, in some cases, should have claimed. In section 5 we will consider several complications to the distinction between saying, meaning, and implicating, including the phenomena of conventional implicature and conversational implic*i*ture (as opposed to implic*a*ture), and, in light of these phenomena and in the face of certain popular objections, modify our notion of saying.

1. Saying and What is Said

The verb 'say' has a variety of everyday uses. We speak not only of speakers saying things but also of sentences, signs, and even clocks saying things. Even limited to acts by speakers, 'say' has a range of common uses. On one end of that range, it denotes the act of uttering (a sentence, typically) and, on the other end, acts of stating or asserting (a proposition). Acts of the former sort are reported by direct quotation, of the form 'S said "…",' and acts of the latter sort by reports of the form 'S stated/asserted that p', where 'p' denotes a proposition. Given that we have these other verbs and given that stating or asserting something entails meaning it (not that this in turn entails believing it), it makes sense to reserve the term 'say' for the in-between act that is reported by indirect quotation, with sentences of the form 'S said that p', assuming that what is said is a proposition.

The notion of saying, along with the correlative notion of what is said, comes into the picture for a very simple reason: a speaker can say one thing while meaning something else. She could mean something instead of what she says, or she could mean something in addition to what she says. Indeed, a speaker can say something without meaning anything at all, as in recitation or translation. Acts of saying, in the sense in which we will be using the term, correspond to Austin's (1962) notion of *locutionary* act. Performing a locutionary act goes beyond merely producing certain sounds, even as belonging a certain language. On the other hand, it must be distinguished from both the *illocutionary* act of doing something *in* saying something and the *perlocutionary* act of doing something *by* saying something. To perform a locutionary act is to utter a sentence 'with a more or less definite sense and a more or less definite reference' (Austin 1962: 93). To be sure, these different

categories of speech are abstractions from the total speech act. It is not as though in uttering a sentence a speaker is performing a series of acts. Rather, in uttering, say, 'I love turnips', a speaker would be saying that she loves turnips, probably asserting that she loves turnips, and perhaps wanting and maybe even getting her audience to want to try some.

Grice's stipulated sense of 'say' is not quite the same as Austin's. He writes, 'I intend what someone has said to be closely related to the conventional meaning of the words (the sentence) he has uttered' (Grice 1975/1989: 25). Assuming that what is said must be a unique proposition, he required further that any semantic ambiguities be resolved and references be fixed. So far this sounds like Austin's notion of locutionary act, although, curiously, Grice did not connect his notion with his former teacher's (indeed, as we will see in the next section, Grice's analysis of speaker meaning could have benefited by taking into account Austin's distinction between illocutionary and perlocutionary acts). However, unlike Austin Grice required that saying something entails meaning it. Otherwise, one merely 'makes as if to say' it. This requirement seems odd (it conflicts with the first of our opening truisms), since if one can't say something without meaning it, one doesn't say anything unless one means it. There is a sense in which that is true, the sense in which 'say' is synonymous with 'state'. Indeed, in Grice's (1961) preliminary account of implicature, his preferred verb was 'state', not 'say'. In my opinion, Grice's main reason for insisting on this stronger sense of 'say' was that it supported his controversial view (proposed in Grice 1968), not to be discussed here, that what expressions mean in a language ultimately comes down to what speakers mean in using them. In any case, surely there's a perfectly good sense in which one can say something without meaning it.

What is the rationale for adopting a locutionary notion of saying and the correlative notion of what is said? The point of tying what is said closely to the conventional meaning of the uttered sentence is to limit it to information carried by that sentence. We can think of what is said as, in effect, the interpreted logical form of the sentence. Grice's reason for requiring resolution of ambiguity is to further limit what is said to the sense of the sentence that is operative in the speaker's act of uttering it. Otherwise, whenever there is ambiguity (often!), multiple things would be said.

Presumably it is the speaker's semantic intention that does the disambiguating. This intention determines what she takes her words to mean as she is using them, and is distinct from her communicative intention, which determines how she intends her audience to take her act of uttering those words.

As for fixing reference, in cases involving indexicals (including pronouns, certain temporal and locational adverbs, and tense), the point is more subtle. With them we need to distinguish their meaning from their reference and take into account the fact that it is the reference, not the meaning, that figures in what is said. The meaning helps pin down the reference but is not itself part of what is said. So, for example, if I utter the sentence 'I love turnips', I thereby say that I love turnips. I do not say that the current utterer of this sentence loves turnips. After all, what I said, that I love turnips, could be true (not that it is true) even if I hadn't uttered the sentence. The meaning rule, that 'I' as used by a given speaker on a given occasion refers to that speaker, is not part of what I say, or would say, if I were to utter 'I love turnips'. An analogous point applies to the use of the present tense. The general idea here was developed by Kaplan (1989), who proposed that the *character* of an expression determines the *content* of the expression relative to a given context of use. The character is a meaning rule that provides for how this content, the expression's reference, is determined in the context. Obviously the rule for 'I' is different from, for example, the rule for 'you' and the one for 'yesterday'.

There is an ongoing debate in philosophy regarding the range of expressions whose reference is literally determined, according to a meaning rule, as a function of their context of use. The primary question at issue is whether it is really the context of use, as opposed to the speaker's referential intention, that determines the reference. We will not pursue this issue here. Suffice to say that there seems to be a basic difference between what determines the reference of terms like 'she' and 'that' as opposed to the reference of terms like 'I' and 'today'. Arguably, the difference is great enough to justify Strawson's (1950) contention that speakers, not expressions, refer (see Bach 2006a for discussion of the question 'What does it take to refer?').

The above niceties aside, both ambiguity and indexicality are different ways in which linguistic meaning does not determine speaker meaning even if the speaker is being completely literal. The

meanings of an ambiguous sentence underdetermines what a speaker could mean in using it literally, obviously because the sentence has too many meanings, i.e. more than one (a speaker can mean more than one thing by trading on an ambiguity, as with puns, but this is an exceptional case). The case of indexicality is different. When we use an expression like 'I', 'tomorrow', 'she', or 'that', the meaning of the expression merely constrains what we can mean in using it literally. Indexicality is like ambiguity insofar as in both cases linguistic meaning limits but does not fully determine what one can mean in speaking literally. They differ, however, in that with ambiguity there is too much linguistic meaning and with indexicality there is too little.

As we will see in later on, following our discussions of meaning and implicature, ambiguity and indexicality are not the only ways in which linguistic meaning can underdetermine literal speaker meaning. It will emerge that finding a suitable notion of saying, together with the correlative notion of what is said, is not as straightforward as Grice supposed, and not just because he needlessly required that to say something entails meaning it. But what is it for a speaker to mean something?

2. Speaker Meaning

Grice (1957) contrasted 'natural' meaning with the sort of meaning ('non-natural', he called it) involved in language and communication. Smoke means fire because it is naturally correlated with fire, but the word 'smoke' means smoke by virtue of being conventionally correlated with smoke. Smoke means fire because it is correlated with the presence of fire, but the word 'smoke' is not correlated with the presence of smoke. It is a conventional means for talking about smoke, whether or not smoke is present. Its meaning is a matter of convention, since it could just as well have meant something else (and some other word could just as well have meant smoke). It means smoke because, and only because, speakers normally use it to mean that and expect others who use it to mean that as well.

So within the category of non-natural meaning there is both linguistic meaning, in this case what 'smoke' means, and speaker meaning, here what a speaker means in using that word. Take an example. Suppose a speaker utters the sentence, 'I smell smoke', using the pronoun 'I' to refer to

herself, the verb 'smell' (in the present tense) for olfactory sensing, and the noun 'smoke' to refer to smoke, presumably some that is nearby. Given what these words mean and how, as syntactically determined, these combine to comprise the (linguistic) meaning of the entire sentence, the semantic content of the sentence, relative to that context, is that she (the speaker) smells smoke. This could well be what she means in uttering that sentence, but it might not be. For she could have been speaking figuratively, in which case she would have meant something else. She could have meant, regarding something her interlocutor had just said, that he was trying to divert her attention from what was at issue. On the other hand, she could have been speaking perfectly literally. Even then, it is one thing for the sentence to mean something and another for a speaker to mean that in uttering it.

Meaning Intentions

We will not delve into the long debated meta-semantic question of what it is for an expression to have meaning, except to note one aspect of that question: which is more basic, expression meaning or speaker meaning? This question was important to Grice, who held not only that speaker meaning is more basic but that expression meaning ultimately reduces to speaker meaning (Grice 1968). His was a controversial version of the relatively uncontroversial view that semantics reduces to psychology.

Our question is what is it for a speaker to mean something, whether in using language or in doing something else. It is not merely to produce some effect in one's audience. There are lots of ways of doing that. At the very least it must be intentional. Besides, there are different ways in which one can intend to produce some effect on others, and most of them are not just matters of successful communication. In communicating something, one has a special sort of intention and intends to produce a special sort of effect.

What is special about the intention? Part of it is that one intends one's audience to recognize the very effect one is trying to produce in them. Moreover, as Grice (1957) argued, one intends to produce that effect precisely *by way of* their recognizing that intention. This is the gist of Grice's ingenious idea that the special sort of intention involved in meaning something, in trying to communicate something, is in a certain sense *reflexive*.

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Think about what is involved in communicating. You have a certain thought and you wish to 'get it across' to someone. So your intention to convey it must not be hidden. Your intention will not be communicative if you intend the hearer to think a certain thing without thinking you intend them to think it. For example, if you yawningly say 'I am sleepy', your intention that they think you are sleepy is not essential to their coming to think that you are sleepy – your yawning manner of speech will do. Of course, they will recognize that you intend them to think that you are sleepy. However, because of how you said it, their recognizing this would not have been necessary. Indeed, they would think that you are sleepy even if you had said something completely different, provided you said it yawningly. In some cases, recognizing your intention may vitiate it, for example, if you make some self-deprecating remarks in order to get your listener to think you are modest. Your intention that they think this won't be fulfilled if they recognize your intention that they think this. But even in our first example, in which recognizing the speaker's intention doesn't interfere with its fulfillment, the hearer's recognition of it is not needed for its fulfillment.

Such examples suggested to Grice that for an intention to be communicative, it must be overt in a specific sort of way. It must be intentionally overt and this feature must play a special role in its fulfillment. That is, in trying to communicate something to others by saying something, a speaker intends the audience to recognize that intention partly by taking into account *that* they are intended to recognize it. Because this is part of what the speaker intends, communicative intentions are distinctively self-referential or reflexive. A speaker means something by his utterance only if he intends his utterance 'to produce some effect in an audience by means of the recognition of this intention' (Grice 1957/1989: 220). But not just any sort of effect will do.

The Intended 'Effect'

If you are communicating something to someone, *communicative* success does not require that they respond as you wish, such as to believe you, obey you, or forgive you. As Searle pointed out, these are perlocutionary effects, the production of which goes beyond merely communicating (1969: 47). It is enough, as Strawson similarly argued, for the hearer to understand the utterance (1964: 459), that is, for the speaker to achieve uptake (Grice later (1989: 351-2) objected to this, but did not make

clear why). For that the hearer must identify the attitude the speaker is expressing – believing, intending, regretting, etc. – and its content, but the speaker can succeed in communicating even if she does not actually possesses that attitude. For example, she can convey an apology without actually having the regret she expresses and without the hearer believing she possesses it. If the speaker says, 'I'm sorry I broke your vase', to succeed in communicating the apology it is enough that the hearer take her to be expressing her regret. This is clear from the fact that the hearer might understand the apology as such even if he doubts that the speaker regrets breaking the vase.

So, it seems, the intended 'effect' required for meaning something, for communicating, is for the hearer (or reader) to recognize one's communicative intention. Achieving any further effect, such as being believed or being obeyed, goes beyond communicating successfully. The purely communicative effect is just having one's utterance understood. Bach and Harnish distinguish expressing an attitude (a belief, desire, regret, or whatever) from actually possessing it or at least intending the hearer to think one possesses it. According to their definition, 'to express an attitude is reflexively to intend the hearer to take one's utterance as reason to think one has that attitude' (Bach and Harnish 1979: 15). Accordingly, communicating successfully, being understood, consists simply in having the expressed attitude recognized. It does not require the hearer to respond in any further way, not even to think one actually possesses attitude. As they say, 'the fulfillment of a communicative intention consists simply in its recognition' *(ibid.)*. By isolating the purely communicative effect of an act of utterance, this formulation makes sense of Grice's idea that speaker meaning essentially involves a reflexive intention.

Reflexive Paradox?

Now that we have identified the intended effect specific to communication, we can return to Grice's original characterization of the intention itself. After describing it as the intention 'to produce an effect in an audience by means of the recognition of this intention', Grice comments, 'this seems to involve a reflexive paradox, but it does not really do so' (1957/1989: 219). It seems to because the intention is self-referential. Moreover, there seems to be something circular about the hearer's

inference. After all, the hearer is to identify the speaker's intention partly on the supposition that he is intended to. But is there anything really paradoxical about this?

A reflexive intention is not a series of intentions, each referring to the previous one. Not appreciating this has led to considerable confusion, even on Grice's part. Indeed, earlier in the very paragraph just quoted from, he gives an alternate formulation that requires that a speaker 'must also intend his utterance to be recognized as so intended' (1957/1989: 219). Grice (1969), in trying to improve upon his earlier formulation, explicitly abandons reflexive intentions in favor of iterative intentions. So had his critic Strawson (1964), and so would his defender Schiffer (1972). Their ever more complex formulations were each prompted by counterexamples to the previous formulation, starting with an intention to convey something and a further intention that the first be recognized, itself accompanied by a still further intention that it in turn be recognized, and potentially so on *ad infinitum.* No wonder Grice was eventually led to reject the whole idea and suggest that what is needed instead is the absence of a 'sneaky intention' (1989: 302). Sticking with self-referential intentions avoids this complexity and the threat of an infinite regress. For there was nothing wrong with Grice's original idea, assuming the intended effect is properly characterized, as above. It does not lead to the reflexive paradox that worried Grice.

The semblance of reflexive paradox in Grice's original formulation arises from the key phrase 'by means of the recognition of this intention'. This might suggest (and has suggested to some) that to understand the speaker the hearer must engage in some sort of circular reasoning. It sounds as though the hearer must already know what the speaker's communicative intention is in order to recognize it. But that misconstrues what the hearer has to take into account in order to recognize the speaker's intention. The hearer does not infer that the speaker means a certain thing from the premise that the speaker intends to convey that very thing. Rather, he operates on the presumption that the speaker, like any speaker, intends to communicate something or other. The hearer takes into account this general fact, not the content of the specific intention, in order to identify that intention.

3. Conversational Implicature

Grice is best known, in both linguistics and philosophy, for his theory of conversational implicature. It was sketched in a section (III) of his 1961 paper, and developed in his William James Lectures at Harvard in 1967, which were subsequently published individually in disparate places and eventually collected as Part I of the posthumous Grice 1989. The main ideas are laid out in 'Logic and Conversation' (Grice 1975/1989), which, from what I have been able to ascertain from Google Scholar, is the most cited philosophy paper ever published. Grice's basic idea was not new, although his name for it was. What distinguished his work from previous work on 'contextual' or 'pragmatic' implication (see Hungerland 1960) was his ingenious account of how it works (it also served as an antidote to the excesses or ordinary language philosophy, in ways chronicled in Chapman 2005). This account was essentially an extension of his theory of speaker meaning, but what made it original, as we will see, was the role of his 'Cooperative Principle' and the various 'Maxims of Conversation' that fall under it.

In Grice's view one can mean something either by saying it or by saying (or 'making as if to say') something else. What one implicates by saying something is generally not implied by what one says. That is why Grice used the verb 'implicate' rather than 'imply' and the neologism 'implicature' rather than 'implication'. For example, suppose you are asked about a dinner you had at an expensive restaurant, and you reply, 'It didn't make me sick'. Your saying this implicates that it was not very good. However, what you said obviously does not *imply* this. After all, a dinner that does not make you sick can be excellent. However, it is possible for what is implicated to be implied. If you are asked whether you have more than two children and you reply that you have three girls and a boy, what you say implies the very thing that you implicate, namely, that you have more than two children. That is because you also mean, albeit indirectly, that you have more than two children. There are many other things implied by what you say that you do not mean, hence do not implicate, for example that you have more than one child and that you have more than two girls (much of Davis's (1998) and other critiques of Grice assume that he did not require that implicatures be things speakers mean).

The mediocre meal example illustrates Grice's observation that conversational implicatures are *cancelable* – you could have added, 'I don't mean to suggest that the meal wasn't great', without taking back your assertion that it didn't make you sick. In fact, there are circumstances in which the implicature (that the dinner was not very good) would not have been in the offing in the first place. Suppose that you and your interlocutor had just learned that there had been an outbreak of food poisoning at the restaurant in question. In that case, your saying that the meal didn't make you sick would not implicate anything about its culinary quality.

How can a speaker implicate something that is not implied by what she says and still manage to convey it? She can do this by exploiting the fact that the hearer presumes her to be cooperative, in particular, to be speaking truthfully, informatively, relevantly, and otherwise appropriately. If taking the utterance at face value is incompatible with this presumption, the hearer, still relying on this presumption, must find some plausible candidate for what else the speaker could have meant. And, crucially, the speaker must intend him to do this. In the case of the speaker asked about dinner, the hearer must figure out what she meant, relying on the presumption that she intended it to be an accurate, informative, and appropriate answer to the question. In effect what the hearer does is, on the presumption that the speaker is being cooperative, to find a plausible explanation for why she said what she said.

The Cooperative Principle and the Maxims of Conversation

Grice systematized these ideas by formulating an overarching *Cooperative Principle* and four sets of subordinate *maxims of conversation* (Grice, 1975/1989: 26-27):

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.

QUALITY: Try to make your contribution one that is true.

1. Do not say what you believe to be false.

2. Do not say that for which you lack evidence.

QUANTITY:

1. Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the

exchange).

2. Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

RELATION: Be relevant.

MANNER: Be perspicuous.

1. Avoid obscurity of expression.

2. Avoid ambiguity.

3. Be brief. (Avoid unnecessary prolixity.)

4. Be orderly.

We will not fuss over the precise meanings of these maxims, except to note one quirk about the wording of the sub-maxims of Quality. Like the Cooperative Principle itself, most of the maxims and sub-maxims concern a speaker's 'conversational contribution'. However, the sub-maxims of Quality specifically concern what (not) to *say*. This was probably just a slip on Grice's part, since if these two sub-maxims do not constrain what the hearer can plausibly take the speaker to be implicating, they won't motivate an inferential strategy aimed to correct the appearance, due to what the speaker says, that what she means is false or unwarranted.

There are questions one could ask about the precise formulation of Grice's maxims and about whether the list is incomplete or, for that matter, overly elaborate (for discussion see Harnish 1976 and Grice 1989: 368-72). One might wonder, for example, about what happens when maxims clash, that is, when applying different maxims gives different candidates for what a speaker might be implicating. A common objection to Grice's account is that it is not adequately predictive and, indeed, that different social situations or cultural norms call for different formulations. Such worries presuppose that Grice intended his account to explain precisely how a hearer figures out what the speaker is implicating and, for matter, how a speaker manages to come up with something to say that will make evident what she means in saying it. These are psychological questions, far beyond the capacity of current psychology to answer.

Philosophically, the important point is that, whatever the particulars, even though what we mean cannot in general be read off of what we say, we as speakers are pretty good at making our

communicative intentions evident and that as hearers we are pretty good at identifying such intentions. Grice's primary insight was that unless communication were a kind of telepathy, there must be rational constraints on speakers' communicative intentions and corresponding constraints on hearers' inferences about them. As the examples below will illustrate, Grice's maxims point to the sorts of considerations that speakers intend hearers to take into account, and hearers do take into account, for communication is to succeed, not that it always does. With this mind Bach and Harnish suggest that the maxims are better viewed as *presumptions* (1979: 62-65), which hearers rely on to guide their inferences as to what speakers mean. So, when a presumption seems not to be in force, a hearer seeks an interpretation of the speaker's utterance such that it does apply after all, and interprets it partly on the supposition that she intends him to. Bach and Harnish propose to replace Grice's CP, the vague and rather unrealistic Cooperative Principle, with a *Communicative Presumption:* when people speak, presumably they do so with identifiable communicative intentions (1979: 12-15). After all, conversations need not be cooperative – people often argue or have conflicting aims – but successful communication is still generally necessary for whatever else takes place.

Examples

The following examples illustrate how hearers compensate for apparent violations of the different maxims (or, if you prefer, apparent suspensions of different presumptions). If a speaker says something that is obviously false, thereby flouting the first maxim of quality, she could well mean something else. For example, with (1) she would probably mean the opposite of what she says, with (2) something less extreme, and with (3) something more down to earth.

(1) George W. Bush was the most intellectual president in American history.

(2) I could have eaten a million of those chips.

(3) He bungee-jumped from 85% approval down to 40%, up to 60%, and down to 15%.

In these cases, respectively, of irony, hyperbole, and metaphor, it should be evident what a speaker is likely to mean, even though it is not what she says. Notice that it is possible, however unlikely, that the speaker *does* mean what she says, but then her communicative intention would be unreasonable,

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since she could not reasonably expect the hearer to figure this out. It is important to remember that it is one thing for a speaker to mean/implicate something and another thing for the hearer to figure out what she means/implicates, that is, for the utterance to be communicatively successful.

With quantity implicatures a speaker typically means not just what she says but also that she does not mean something stronger. It is her not saying the stronger thing that conveys that she is not in a position to assert it (note that the speaker may implicate instead that she is unwilling to assert something stronger). Consider these examples:

(4)   Barry tried hard to lift the 300-lb barbell.

(5)   He thought he was strong enough to lift it.

(6)   He had lifted the 250-lb barbell three times.

(7)   Barry finished his workout with a swim or a run.

Keeping in mind that speakers, not sentences, implicate things, we have to imagine uttering such sentences or hearing them uttered in particular contexts in order to get clear cases of implicature, quantity implicature in this case. In uttering (4) you would likely implicate that Barry failed to lift the 300-lb barbell. Otherwise, you would have said that he succeeded. Similarly, with (5) you might implicate that he wasn't sure that he could lift it. With (6) you would probably implicate that he didn't lift the 250-lb barbell more than three times. And, finally, in uttering (7) you would implicate that Barry went for either a swim or a run and not both and that you do not know which. In the case of (4) and (5), what the speaker implicates can be figured out on the presumption that if she was in a position to give stronger or more specific information, she would have. With (6), the presumption is that the speaker is in a position to know how many times Barry lifted the 250-lb barbell, whereas with (7) the presumption is just the opposite, since if she knew whether Barry went for a swim or a run (or both), she would have said so.

Relevance implicatures can also be cases of conveying information by saying one thing and leaving something else out. Grice's two best-known examples are of this type:

(8)   There is a garage around the corner. [said in response to 'I am out of petrol']

(9)   He is punctual, and his handwriting is excellent. [the entire body of a letter of

recommendation]

An utterance of (8) is relevant, and a rational speaker would intend it as such, only if the speaker

means also that the garage is open and has petrol for sale. So the hearer is to reason accordingly. (9)

is rather different, on account of the speaker's reason for not being more explicit. In this case, the

writer intends the reader to figure out that if she had anything more positive to say about the

candidate, she would have said it.

If it seems that quantity implicatures are special cases of relevance implicatures, that is because,

generally speaking, they are. What makes them special is it they involve the exploitation of a scale.

As Horn (1972) first spelled out, conveying a 'scalar implicature' takes advantage of the existence of

a naturally stronger alternative along a scale, e.g. 'some' rather than 'all' and 'or' rather than 'and'.

So using 'some' typically conveys 'not all' and using 'or' typically conveys not both.

Manner implicatures are probably the least common. They exploit not just the speaker's saying a

certain thing but her saying it in a certain way. For that reason, they are exceptions to Grice's

nondetachability test, according to which what a speaker implicates would have been implicated

even if the speaker had said the same thing in a different way (Grice 1975/1989: 39). With manner

implicatures, the way matters. It could be the wording, such as using an elaborate phrase when a

single word is obviously available to say the same thing, or perhaps the pronunciation, such as by

uttering a certain word in a conspicuously odd way. Obviously, if there are different ways of saying

the same thing and how the speaker says it affects what the hearer is likely to take into account in

figuring out what the speaker means, the implicature *is* detachable. The following examples illustrate

this.

(10)   You have prepared what closely resembles a meal of outstanding quality.

(11)   I would like to see more of you.

Imagine a culinary instructor uttering the longwinded (10). Her intention would likely be to convey

that the meal is not nearly as good as it appears. A speaker of (11) could exploit its ambiguity

(compare 'I would like to see you again') to convey something besides wanting to spend more time with the hearer.

It should be understood that Grice does not suppose that speakers consciously exploit the maxims or that hearers consciously take them into account. However, this raises the interesting question of just what is involved psychologically in the process of communication when the speaker does not mean exactly what she says. There is not only the commonly addressed question of how hearers manage to figure out what speakers mean given that they say what they say (and say it in the way they say it), but also the rarely addressed question of how speakers choose what to say so as to make evident what they mean, even when they do not make it explicit. Grice did not address the latter question, and his account of implicature is commonly misconstrued as an answer to the former question. Being clear on what Grice was up to and what he was not avoids a number of misunderstandings.

4. Common Misunderstandings about Conversational Implicature

There are two common misconceptions about the role of the maxims (or presumptions). First, they do not *determine* implicatures (even Grice (1989: 372) occasionally suggested that they do) but, rather, help explain how they get conveyed. They are considerations that speakers implicitly intend hearers to, and hearers do, take into account to figure out ('determine' in the sense of ascertain) what the speaker is implicating. Since that is a matter of speaker meaning, it is the speaker's communicative intention that determines (in the sense of constitute) what is implicated. Also, it should not be supposed, as it often is, that the maxims apply only to implicatures. This misconception is understandable insofar as the maxims play a key role in Grice's account of how implicatures get conveyed, but in fact they apply equally to completely literal utterances, where the speaker means just what she says. After all, the hearer still has to infer this. It is thus wrong to suppose that the maxims come into play only where linguistic meaning leaves off and speaker meaning and extralinguistic, contextual information take over (for more on context and what it does and doesn't determine, see Bach 2005).

Another misunderstanding concerns what, when a speaker says one thing but means something else, the hearer is to infer. Contrary to what philosophers and linguists seem commonly to suppose (perhaps because of the ambiguous phrase 'infer what the speaker implicates'), the hearer does not have to infer the thing the speaker implicates. He merely has to infer that the speaker implicates (means) it. So, for example, if the speaker says and means that a certain new book has a beautiful cover and implicates that it is not worth reading, the hearer needs to infer that the speaker means that it is not worth reading. He does not need to infer that it is in fact not worth reading. The speaker might want him to believe that, but this is not necessary as far as communication is concerned. Indeed, he could even doubt that *she* believes it (he might think she resents the author's success).

A remarkably widespread misconception is that implicatures are inferences, or at least are determined (and not merely ascertained) by inferences rather than by the speaker. It is based on confusing what is implicated (by a speaker) with what is involved in figuring out what is implicated. Implicatures are things speakers mean, not what hearers, even rational ones, think they mean. Accordingly, if a speaker is to succeed in communicating something, the hearer must figure out that it is meant. That requires inference. Yet some of the most brilliant researchers, including Levinson (2000), Geurts (2010), and Chierchia *et al*. (forthcoming), write as if implicatures themselves are inferences.

A further misconception is that linguistic expressions can implicate things. Speakers do. To be sure, there are certain expressions that are *characteristically* used (by speakers) to implicate things (Davis (1998) regards this as a reason to say that sentences themselves implicate things, but he does so in the course of arguing that what is implicated is generally a matter of convention, not speaker intention). When this occurs we have what Grice calls *generalized* conversational implicatures (as opposed to *particularized* ones). These have been investigated in great depth by Levinson (2000), who thinks they give rise to an intermediate level of meaning. In fact, they give rise to an intermediate kind of inference, but inferences are not meanings.

A related misunderstanding leads to Levinson's objection that Grice's approach cannot account for the (alleged) phenomenon of 'pragmatic intrusion', which he thinks is exemplified by so-called embedded implicatures. As Levinson puts it,

> Grice's account makes implicature dependent on a prior *determination* of 'the said'. The said in turn depends on disambiguation, indexical resolution, reference fixing, not to mention ellipsis unpacking and generality narrowing. But each of these processes, which are prerequisites to *determining* the proposition expressed, may themselves depend crucially on processes that look indistinguishable from implicatures. Thus what is said seems both to *determine* and to be *determined* by implicature. Let us call this Grice's circle. (Levinson 2000: 186; my italics)

This objection is based on confusing the two sorts of determination mentioned above. The first two highlighted words are forms of 'determine' in the sense of ascertain, but the last two, where Levinson draws his conclusion, are in the constitutive sense. In that sense, what is said neither determines nor is determined by what is implicated. This is a matter of the speaker's intention.

Levinson and many others misconstrue Grice's account as a psychological model of the hearer's inference, indeed one according to which the hearer must ascertain what the speaker says before figuring out what the speaker implicating (see Bach 2001: 24-25, and Saul 2002). But that is not how Grice intended his account. He required that 'the presence of a conversational implicature be capable of being worked out' (1975/1989: 31), but he did not require that it must be.

This last misconception (for still more see Bach 2006b) leads to the widespread misconception, evident from an extensive literature, that some implicatures are 'embedded', 'pre-propositional' (Recanati 2003), or 'pre-compositional' (Chierchia *et al.* forthcoming). This is thought to arise with utterances of sentences like these:

(12) It is better to get married and get pregnant than to get pregnant and get married.

(13) Bill thinks that there were four boys at the party.

Since the two infinitival clauses of (12) are semantically equivalent, a speaker is likely to implicate that what is better is getting married and *then* getting pregnant. With (13) the implicature is not that

there were exactly four boys at the party but that Bob thinks that. In fact, such examples illustrate merely that the process of figuring out what is implicated does not require first ascertaining what is said. They do not show that the implicature is embedded in anything. Indeed, since speakers implicate, it does not even make sense to say that some implicatures are embedded. It is irrelevant that the hearer figures out what is implicated without having first to figure out what is said. Recanati supposes that Grice's account requires (conversational) implicatures to have a 'global, post-propositional character', on the grounds that for Grice 'implicatures are generated via an inference *whose input is the fact that the speaker has said that* p' (Recanati 2003: 300). Recanati's point is that certain implicatures get 'computed' before what is said is ascertained. However, this does not show that the implicature itself is somehow embedded. In the case of (13), one of Recanati's examples, the implicature is supposed to be that Bill believes that there were not more than four boys at the party in question. But the implicature is not literally embedded. What the speaker says is the proposition expressed by (13), and what the speaker implicates is this other proposition. How the hearer figures this out is another matter.

Not only that, it seems that the speaker does not really mean two things, the proposition that Bill believes that there were four boys at the party and the proposition that Bill believes that there were not more than four boys at the party in question. It seems, rather, that the speaker means but one thing, that Bill believes that there were exactly four boys at the party in question. This example illustrates that some apparent instances of implicature are really cases of something else.

5. Between Saying and Implicating

A speaker can say something and mean just that. The contrast between saying and implicating allows both for cases in which the speaker means what she says and something else as well and for ones in which the speaker says one thing and means something else instead. Grice counted both as kinds of implicature, although the latter might better be described as speaking figuratively (recall, though, that Grice described this as a case of merely 'making as if to say' something, since for him saying something entails meaning it). Grice seems to have overlooked a phenomenon intermediate between

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saying and implicating, one that has been investigated by many others (Sperber and Wilson 1986, Bach 1994, Carston 2002, and Recanati 2004). As they have observed, there are many sentence forms whose typical uses go beyond their meanings, even with references fixed and ambiguities resolved, but are not cases of implicating (or speaking figuratively). The reason is that what the speaker means, though distinct from what is said (strictly speaking), is too closely tied to what is said to be a case of merely implicating.

Two Kinds of Impliciture

In homage to Grice I call these in-between cases conversational *impliciture* (Bach 1994). That's with an 'i' rather than an 'a'. It comes in two forms, depending on whether or not what is said fully comprises a proposition. In the first case what the speaker means is a more elaborate proposition than what is expressly said, as with a likely utterance of (14):

   (14)   Jack and Jill are married.

The speaker is likely to mean that they are married *to each other,* even though she does not make the last part explicit. Clearly that element is cancelable, since she could have added 'but not to each other' without contradicting herself. Even so, she is not implicating that Jack and Jill are married to each other, since she does not mean *both* that Jack and Jill are married *and* that they are married to each other. She means one thing, not two. What she means is an embellished version of what she says. Similarly, someone uttering (15),

   (15)   Harry took two aspirins and got rid of his headache.

would likely mean that Harry took two aspirin and *then, as a result,* and got rid of his headache. Again, the inexplicit part is cancelable, for a speaker uttering (15) could have added, 'but not because of the aspirin'. In both cases it is not the linguistic meaning of the uttered sentences but the fact that the speaker said what she said, presumably with maximal relevant informativeness, as per the first maxim of quantity, that provides the hearer with reason to think that the speaker intended to convey something more expansive.

   Then there are cases in which what the speaker says is not merely less expansive than what she means but falls short of comprising a proposition (even with references fixed and ambiguities

resolved). Suppose you are meeting some friends at a restaurant. You arrive at the appointed time, and all but one of the others arrives are there. After a few minutes, you remark,

(16)   Larry is late.

You cannot mean merely that Larry is late, full stop. Presumably you mean that Larry is late for the dinner in question. And if the *maître d'* announces,

(17)   Your table is ready.

presumably he means that your table is ready for your party to be seated there. In both cases the sentence falls short of fully expressing a proposition – it is *semantically incomplete*. Yet in each case what the speaker means *is* a complete proposition. Sentences like (16) and (17) appear to violate the grammar school dictum that a sentence, unlike a mere word, phrase, or 'sentence fragment', must express a 'complete thought'. As with (14) and (15), though for a different reason (semantic incompleteness), what the speaker means is more specific than what the sentence means. We might say that whereas what a user of (14) or (15) means is an *expansion* of the sentence meaning, what a user of (16) or (17) means is a *completion* of it. These terms are meant to suggest, on the assumption that what a speaker means must be propositional, that in the first case what the speaker said is something that she could have meant (expansion is in a sense optional), whereas in the second case what was said is insufficient to have been meant (it requires completion into a proposition).

Regarding examples like (16) and (17) and many others like them (for numerous examples see Sperber and Wilson 1986 and Bach 1994), it might be objected that the lexical semantics of 'late' or of 'ready' requires a complement (or, as it is sometimes put, includes a variable that must be given a value or an argument slot that must be filled), hence that (16) and (17) are not really semantically incomplete but more akin to sentences containing indexicals. Properly replying to this objection would require going through the variety of different lexical items that seem to give rise to semantic incompleteness, but the general idea is very simple. Consider examples like (18) and (19):

(18)   It is 9 in the morning.

(19)   The earth rotates at more than 1,000 mph.

Time of day is relative to a time zone, but (18), as it stands, that is, without any specification of time zone, (18) is neither true nor false and does not express a proposition. Many speakers, particularly very young ones, are ignorant of time zones, and it would be charitable to attribute to them implicit reference to a time zone or even to their location. It is a fact about time of day, not about lexical semantics, that time of day is relative to a time zone. Similarly, as it stands (19) is neither true nor false and does not express a proposition. Even leaving aside the fact that the earth's rotation is relative to other objects, the sun in particular, its speed of rotation is relative to latitude. If the intended location is at or near the equator, a speaker of (19) would be asserting something true but not if it were near the North or South Pole. However, there seems to be no basis for supposing that the requirement of relativization to latitude is lexically or otherwise linguistically imposed. So, even if it is arguable that some terms that seem to give rise to semantic incompleteness lexically require complements, this is not the case in general.

Now some have contended that semantic incompleteness is the norm, not the exception. Recanati, for example, denies 'that semantic interpretation can deliver something as determinate as a proposition. On my view, semantic interpretation, characterized by its deductive character, does not deliver complete propositions: it delivers only semantic schemata' (2004: 56). Sperber and Wilson (1986) and Carston (2002) have taken a similar stance. However, it seems to me that while it is true that much is left implicit in ordinary speech, they have seriously overgeneralized from this fact and relied on a skewed sample of relatively short sentences. If they were right, then all of the things we mean would be ineffable. For their view entails that no proposition is semantically expressible, even by a sentence too verbose to be used in casual conversation. However, the most they can hope to have shown is that the propositions people convey when using short, idiomatic sentences are not semantically expressed by *those* sentences. They haven't begun to show that there aren't other, less semantically impoverished sentences that speakers could have used to make what they meant fully explicit.

Saying and Impliciture

These same critics of Grice have pointed out that expansions and completions are not related closely enough to conventional meaning to fall under Grice's notion of what is said but are too closely related to count as implicatures. Sperber and Wilson (1986: 182) coined the word *explicature* for this in-between category, since part of what is meant explicates what is said (sometimes they describe it as a 'development of the logical form' of the uttered sentence). However, their neologism trades on an association with 'explicit', as in their pet phrase 'explicit content' and Carston's (2002) 'explicit communication' (this term occurs in the book's subtitle). 'Impliciture' seems like a better term for this phenomenon, since it suggests that part of what is meant, the implicit content, is communicated implicitly, whether by expansion or completion (however, the issue here is not merely terminological, for, as explained in Bach 2010, there are some subtle but real differences between impliciture and explicature). David Braun (p.c.) has invented the verb 'implicite' for what a speaker does when what she means is an enrichment of what she 'locutes' (says in the locutionary sense).

Rather than adopt the term 'explicature', Recanati (2004) proposes to extend the notion of what is said, hence of saying itself, to cover the above cases. In fact, he offers a series of progressively more liberal notions of saying. It is hard to see that what we mean by 'say', hence by 'what is said', can be anything more than a terminological question, albeit one whose answer depends on theoretical utility. Grice's preferred notion had the constituents what is said 'corresponding to the meanings of the constituents of the sentence and mirroring its syntactic structure' (Grice 1969/1989: 87), but he also insisted that is said be meant (by the speaker). The latter requirement seems arbitrary, for reasons discussed in section 1. Worse than that, it obscures the distinction between saying in the locutionary sense, for which we have independent need, and the illocutionary notion of saying, i.e. stating or asserting. Keeping this distinction in mind allows for a notion, saying in the illocutionary sense of stating, whereby what is said is 'enriched' by 'pragmatic processes' (Recanati 2004). Notice, moreover, that this does not result in what Levinson calls 'pragmatic intrusion' (2000: 189ff), since the illocutionary level is inherently pragmatic.

Recanati does not deny that we can notionally draw this distinction, but he has argued, on both intuitive and psychological grounds, against the theoretical utility of adopting the locutionary notion of saying (for fuller discussion of the following issues see Bach 2001: 21-28). He contends that people's intuitions about what is said (and about the truth or falsity of what is said) tend to be responsive to the presence of implicit elements. However, all this goes to show, assuming that Recanati is right about people's intuitions (he has not conducted actual studies), is that people tend to conflate saying with meaning, specifically stating or asserting. Imagining themselves in real-life conversational situations, they would imagine what speakers are likely to mean in making their utterances. It seems likely that subjects would make stereotypical assumptions about the situations in which target sentences are uttered and that their intuitions would be colored accordingly. So of course their intuitions would be responsive to embellishments of the content of the sentence actually uttered.

Recanati also appeals to claims about psychological processes to debunk the locutionary notion of saying/what is said, and Carston has argued similarly (2002: 170-181). The gist of their argument is that what is said in the strict, locutionary sense generally does not get mentally represented in the process of understanding an utterance. They claim, quite plausibly, that hearers figure out what is 'implicited' on the fly, not after and without the benefit of ascertaining what is strictly said. However, this is irrelevant to what speakers do when they produce utterances. What is said (again, in the sense at issue) is the content of the locutionary act performed by the *speaker*. It has nothing to do with what goes in the mind of the *hearer*.

This is not to deny the importance of investigating the cognitive processes involved in hearers' understanding of what speakers mean. Like Recanati, Sperber and Wilson (1986), Carston (2002), and many others have concerned themselves with these processes, but that does not justify equivocating on the term 'determination' as it occurs in the phrase 'determination of what is said'. As we have seen, this phrase can designate either the process of ascertaining what a speaker says in uttering a certain sentence or whatever it is that makes it the case that the speaker says a certain thing Obviously, ascertaining what a speaker says in uttering something presupposes that there is

something that the speaker does say. It plays no role in making it the case that the speaker says what she says.

Summing Up

Clarifying the distinction between saying, meaning, and implicating has required refining Grice's notions of each by way of introducing further distinctions. Borrowing from speech act theory, we invoked the distinction between locutionary and illocutionary acts to drop Grice's counterintuitive requirement that to say something entails meaning it. In order to make sense of Grice's ingenious idea that speaker meaning involves a kind of self-referential yet audience-directed intention, we needed to distinguish the specifically communicative 'effect' of understanding from other, perlocutionary effects on an audience. Next we clarified Grice's notion of conversational implicature, mainly by identifying various misconceptions about it. Many of these can be avoided by heeding the distinction between a speaker's meaning something and the hearer's figuring out that the speaker means it. Also, the conversational maxims or presumptions do not generate or even determine implicitures but, rather, provide considerations that the hearer may be intended to take into account to figure out what a speaker means/implicates. We then pointed out that the distinction between saying and implicating is not exhaustive and defended the use of the term 'impliciture' for what falls between what is said (and meant) and what is implicated. Finally, by distinguishing the speaker's semantic intention from her communicative intention and both from what may be intuitively evident to or otherwise go on in the mind of the hearer, we defended the notion of a speaker's purely locutionary, or semantic, act of saying. The aim of all this has been to distinguish the linguistic from the extralinguistic information that speakers try to make available to their listeners, to identify the sorts of intentions they have in so doing, and to describe the means by which this information is made available to or is inferable by the hearer from the fact that the speaker did what she did.

We have not covered the many debates that Grice's notions have provoked, the radical alternatives to his approach, the range and variety of implicatures (never mind presuppositions) that philosophers and linguists have discussed, or how all this fits into speech act theory and pragmatics

in general. Whereas we have focused on issues raised by Grice's most important and influential ideas, speaker meaning and conversational implicature, Neale (1992) presents a much fuller discussion of these and related ideas, Levinson (2000) offers an in-depth study of generalized conversational implicature, Bach (1999, 2006c) and Potts (2005, 2007) address Grice's controversial notion of conventional implicature, Chapman (2005) provides a full-length intellectual biography of Grice, Horn (2009) gives a 40-year retrospective on implicature, Geurts (2010) offers in-depth study of quantity implicatures, the most thoroughly studied kind, and the papers collected in Petrus 2010 present some of the most recent developments.

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