Determinations of Meaning

STEPHEN NEALE

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1. INTRODUCTION

Philosophy, mathematics, linguistics, and cognitive science have come together in ways that have revolutionised our understanding of language and communication. But the fertility afforded by differences in perspectives, tools, methods, and vocabularies engenders the potential for misunderstanding and confusion, and it is a striking that wherever there is talk of meaning, interpretation, or context, undue excitement can be generated by what are, at bottom, conflations of metaphysics and epistemology (broadly construed). Perhaps it is not surprising this should happen in linguistics or in legal, literary and archaeological theory; but contemporary philosophy of language and cognitive science are also prey to such conflations. Of particular concern to me here is the considerable confusion that flows from failures to separate constitutive, causal, and epistemic questions about the propositional contents associated with uses of natural language sentences, and the impact of such confusion on the reception of theories of meaning and interpretation in the intentional-inferential tradition—pioneered by Paul Grice (1957, 1961, 1969, 1975) in philosophy and by Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson (1981, 1986, 1995, 2002) in cognitive science—central theses of which I shall develop and defend.

There is little shyness in philosophy about appealing to notions of meaning, saying, implying, referring, communicating, interpreting, and understanding in the course of making apparently substantive claims about language and its use, construed as contributions to substantive debates about the following:

a. The facts determining what a given sentence (e.g. ‘I know him’) means.

b. The facts determining what is (literally) said when a given sentence is used on a given occasion.

c. The facts determining what is (merely) implied (or conversationally implicated) when a given sentence is used on a given occasion.

The issues taken up in this paper are taken up in more detail in Linguistic Pragmatism. Parts of the paper have been presented at the CUNY Graduate Center, New York University, Princeton University, Stanford University, the University of Texas, Austin, the University of Erfurt, the University of Bochum, the University of Buenos Aires, the Institut Jean Nicod, Paris, and the Institute for Philosophy, University of London at various times in 2010, 2011, or 2012. I thank Kent Bach, Ned Block, Robyn Carston, Dan Dennett, Josh Dever, Michael Devitt, Peter Godfrey Smith, Alvin Goldman, Gil Harman, Liz Harman, Dan Harris, Marilyn Johnson, Ernie Lepore, Prashant Parikh, John Perry, Stephen Schiffer, Dan Sperber, Iakovos Vasilou, Deirdre Wilson for encouragement and critical comments that have improved successive versions. I am particularly indebted to Schiffer for helping me see how to clear up a thorny problem about the constitution of Gricean saying that had been nagging me since I wrote my review of Grice’s Studies in the Way of Words over twenty years ago.
d. The facts determining what is referred to when a given word (e.g. ‘I’ or ‘him’) is used on a given occasion.

e. The difference between semantic and pragmatic facts.

f. The relations obtaining among the facts mentioned in (a)-(e).

Unfortunately, conceptual and terminological chaos runs through some of the debates, particularly when the topic is the extent to which what is said when a given sentence $X$ is used on a given occasion is purportedly “underdetermined” or “underspecified” by $X$’s linguistic meaning (as determined by the conventions of the language to which $X$ belongs). Discussions of this topic lead inexorably to questions about how to “bridge the gap” (“take up the slack”, “make up the shortfall”) between sentence meaning and what is said, questions typically answered by appeals to the idea that “context”, “pragmatic factors”, or “non-demonstrative inference” may “determine” (“supply”, “contribute”) “parts” of the content of what is said by (1) “completing”, “developing”, or “filling gaps” in purportedly partial propositions, by (2) “saturating” propositional “schemas”, “stabilising” propositional “radicals”, “fleshing out” propositional “skeletons”, or performing some type of bluish-collar activity on propositional “templates”, “molds”, “dies”, “stencils”, or “blueprints”—the last being my own contribution to this rigamarole—or by (3) “enriching”, “expanding”, “adding to”, or “beefing up” contents that are already fully propositional by processes of “intrusion” or “encroachment”.

But such talk—whether by relevance theorists, contextualists, indexicalists, minimalists, or non-aligned mavericks—routinely involves conflations of metaphysics and epistemology, the veneration of baseless methodological strictures, dubious conceptions of the rôle of intuitions in theorising (including especially intuitions about what is said), equivocal uses of key terms (including especially the verb ‘say’), and plain bad scholarship. One consequence of all this is that competing claims about the “determination” and “richness” of what is said are often empty, incommensurable, purely verbal, or strictly unintelligible. (The best that can be said about much discussion is that participants are talking past one another or availing themselves of unsystematic and highly misleading shorthand.) Another consequence is that theories and theoretical outlooks that may have a good deal going for them are often rejected on grounds that are utterly spurious, most notably theories of meaning and interpretation in the intentional-inferential tradition already mentioned and the “linguistic pragmatist” outlook that runs through and orient the work of Grice, Schiffer, Searle, Sperber and Wilson, Carston, Récanati, and fellow travellers, myself included.²

Underpinning various chaotic debates about the content of what is said is the belief that no empirically significant account of that content can be provided without answering the following question: if a sentence’s meaning (as determined by the conventions of the

language to which it belongs) is not the sole determinant of what is said when that sentence is used on a given occasion to say something, what are the other determinants? Among the candidates that people have argued for or against are the following:

- context
- physical environment
- topic of conversation
- salience
- relevance
- discourse structure
- common ground
- mutual knowledge
- background information
- rationality assumptions
- conversational maxims
- social norms
- social conventions
- social practices
- social environment
- community standards
- pragmatic inference
- expert opinions
- baptisms
- dubbings
- causal chains
- speaker’s intentions.

My own view of the matter is that the original question has a false assumption, viz. that sentence meaning is a determinant of what is said. That may sound like an odd thing to say, but it should sound considerably less so later. Unless there are facts about sentence meaning and saying to be discovered, described and explained, debates about which of the items just listed are supplemental determinants of what is said are exercises in wheel-spinning. To the extent that there are theoretically robust notions of sentence meaning and saying—by which I mean notions that form parts of a nexus of theoretical notions used to describe and explain facts about language and its use—I hold the requisite notions of saying and implicating to be speaker-based and purely intentional (which is why I call them direct speaker meaning and indirect speaker meaning, respectively). I once articulated the intentionalist thesis and one of its consequences thus:

What $S$ [speaker] meant by uttering $X$ may be factored into what $S$ said (or asked) by uttering $X$ and what $S$ only implied…. Following Grice, what $S$ said and what $S$ implied are determined by, and only by, certain very specific interpreter-directed intentions $S$ had in uttering $X$. . . If what $S$ said is determined by, and only by, certain very specific interpreter-directed intentions $S$ had in uttering $X$, then at least some contemporary talk of “contexts” “fixing” or “determining” aspects of what $S$ said—for example the references of indexical expressions—must involve some form of confusion.” (Neale 2004: 78 & 2005: 182).

(I might well have added that talk of $X$’s linguistic meaning determining aspects of what is said must involve some form of confusion too.) In the same works, I also emphasized the need to separate the metaphysical or (constitutive) question concerning what determines (or fixes) what $S$ means and the epistemological (or evidential) question concerning what is used by those other than $S$ to identify what $S$ means (a question to be answered by a theory of interpretation) (Neale 2004: 76 & 2005: 180).

And earlier, in a review of Grice’s Studies in the Way of Words, I remarked that $S$’s conception of such things as the context of utterance, the topic of conversation, background information, and $A$’s [the audience’s] ability to work out what $S$ is up to may all play roles in the formation of $S$’s [communicative] intentions; but this does not undermine the view that what determines [emphasis added] what $S$ means are $S$’s communicative intentions. (Neale, 1992: 552-3).

In order to avoid various types of ambiguity and sidestep other issues, I now prefer to articulate my position more cautiously, which involves, amongst other things, replacing talk of what $S$ says and what $S$ implies with talk of, respectively, what $S$ directly-means and what $S$ indirectly-means:
T1 Audience-directed intentions $S$ had in uttering a sentence $X$ (on a given occasion) are the sole “suppliers” of any propositional content had by what $S$ means and what $S_i$ means by uttering $X$ (on that occasion).

T2 Thinking that the linguistic meaning of $X$, the context in which $X$ is uttered, or indeed, anything other than audience-directed intentions $S$ had in uttering $X$ (on a given occasion) being “suppliers” of any content had by what $S$ means by uttering $X$ (on that occasion) is a mistake typically engendered by (a) conflating constitutive and epistemic notions of the “determination” of the content of what $S$ means, (b) conflating facts that constitutively determine the content of a communicative intention with facts that formally determine it, by which I mean facts that causally constrain the formation of a communicative intention with that content, (c) misunderstanding how sentence meaning, speaker $i$ meaning, speaker $m$ meaning and various other notions fit together in a nexus of theoretical concepts, or (d) a misunderstanding of what semantic and pragmatic theories can plausibly hope to explain.

Defending T1 and T2 is not my only objective here. Indeed, it is my hope that if readers reject the theses they will nonetheless accept virtually all of my other claims, the most important of which are the following:

1. If we do not separate constitutive, epistemic and formal determination in debates about the content of what is said (what is $m$ meant, or explicit content, as Sperber and Wilson call it) we are doomed to debating claims that are empty, incommensurable, purely verbal, or strictly unintelligible.

2. Pragmatists are free to reject the Gricean idea that linguistic meaning is reducible to, or analysable in terms, of speaker meaning. But if notions of saying ($m$meaning), implicating ($i$meaning), and sentence meaning are to find places in a nexus of theoretical notions needed to explain facts about language, then speaker meaning will play an ineliminable rôle in explaining what these notions are (even if saying and implicating do not reduce exactly to my notions of, respectively, direct speaker meaning and indirect speaker meaning). For $S$’s understanding of the meaning of a sentence $X$ is the constant among the things that, on any given occasion, constrain what $S$ can mean by uttering $X$, an ineliminable part of the explanation of why uttering $X$ is an effective way of saying ($m$meaning) the things $S$ can say ($m$mean) in uttering $X$.

3. An interpreter’s reaching a conclusion (or forming a hypothesis) about what $S$ means by uttering a sentence $X$ on a given occasion, amounts to the inferential attribution of meaning intentions to $S$. As Grice, Schiffer, and Sperber and Wilson have stressed, the fact that $S$ has uttered $X$ forms one (usually major) part of the evidence that supports the conclusion (or hypothesis) the interpreter reaches (or forms) about what $S$ means.

4. Even abstracting from issues raised by lexical, structural, anaphoric, and phonological ambiguity, and issues raised by proper names, pronouns, indexicals and demonstratives, an interpreter’s understanding of the linguistic meaning of a sentence
X “underdetermines” any conclusion the interpreter reaches—or any hypothesis the interpreter forms—about what S says in uttering X on a given occasion.

5. (A consequence of 3 and 4.) The content of what is said is as rich as Sperber and Wilson (who call it explicit content) and other linguistic pragmatists say it is, and the usual objections to the rich content view are as specious as I claim they are. The specious objections either change the subject matter or else systematically and fatally conflate different notions of underdetermination. (To make matters worse, pragmatist responses to these attacks have not only failed to spot the conflations, they have tended to reinforce them.)

6. It is not unreasonable to think that linguistic meaning (e.g. sentence meaning) and speaker meaning (which includes direct and indirect speaker meaning) are the only notions of meaning that our nexus of theoretical notions will contain, notions of (e.g.) utterance meaning, the meaning of a sentence token, the meaning of a use of a sentence, and the semantic content of a sentence (relative to a context) being at best superfluous.

7. Quite generally, debates would be clearer if we (a) restricted application of the term ‘semantic’ to facts about the meanings of linguistic objects, meanings and linguistic objects being abstract entities; (b) restricted application of the term ‘pragmatic’ to facts about interpretations of utterances, interpretations being hypotheses interpreters make about what speakers mean when they produce utterances on given occasions (not about what utterances mean), utterances being individual events occurring in space and time; and (c) restricted application of the term ‘formatic’ to facts about the planning of utterances.

A last point about T1 before getting down to business. It is widely held that Grice (1975) explicitly states that the linguistic meaning of a sentence X is the major (but often only partial) constitutive determinant of any content there is to what S says in uttering X on a given occasion. But I maintain it is perfectly possible for Grice (and Sperber and Wilson) to hold T1.³ Grice says explicitly that S cannot say that p in uttering X (in his favoured sense of ‘say’) unless S means that p by uttering X, and what S means for him is wholly constitutively determined by certain audience-directed intentions S has in uttering X. But he also says that S cannot say that p by uttering X unless (very roughly) X is a sentence that, by virtue of the meanings of its parts and their grammatical configuration, is (in a way that needs to be carefully cashed out) an especially and predictably efficacious one for S to utter when wishing to mean that p.⁴ And the fact that Grice imposes this condition on saying might be thought to demonstrate that he cannot be interpreted as holding T1. But drawing that conclusion would involve a misunderstanding of T1.

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³ After an oral presentation of this paper, Sperber informed me that he realised he does actually believe T1.
⁴ See also Schiffer (1972).
PART I: MEANING

2. TWO NOTIONS OF MEANING

Unless there are facts about language and its use to be discovered, described and explained, there will be no serious subject matter for theoretical linguistics or the philosophy of language. Among the relevant facts, we are told, are facts about *meaning*, which include facts about what particular words, phrases, and sentences *mean*, facts about their *meanings*, facts it is the business of *semantics* to discover, describe, and explain. The following sentences might be thought to describe some of these facts:

(1) The Norwegian word ‘og’ has the same *meaning* as the English word ‘or’.
(2) The Norwegian sentence ‘snøen er hvit’ has the same *meaning* as the English sentence ‘snow is white’.
(3) ‘snøen er hvit’ *means* that snow is white.\(^5\)
(4) ‘snow is white’ *means* that snow is white
(5) The *meaning* of ‘snow is white’ is that snow is white.
(6) The *meaning* of the sentence ‘snow is white’ is determined by the meanings of the words ‘snow’, ‘is’, and ‘white’ and their grammatical positions in that sentence.

Specifying the meanings of individual words (lexical semantics) and providing a rigorous account of how the meanings of phrases and sentences are built from the meanings of their parts and their syntactic configuration (compositional semantics) are the major theoretical projects within contemporary semantics. But in much work the words ‘mean’ and ‘meaning’, which occur prominently in (1)-(6), often cede to other terms that are deemed to be just as semantic in character yet of greater theoretical value, most notably the adjective ‘true’ and the verbs ‘refer’, ‘denote’, ‘designate’, and ‘express’ (and related nouns). The following, for example, are often said to describe semantic facts:

(7) ‘og’ expresses conjunction in Norwegian
(8) ‘Oslo’ refers to (denotes, designates) Oslo
(9) ‘snow is white’ is true iff snow is white
(10) ‘snow is white’ expresses the proposition that snow is white.
(11) ‘snøen er hvit’ expresses the proposition that snow is white.

With syntax, semantics investigates properties of linguistic objects, which are types or abstract objects that must be distinguished from particular *utterances* of those objects, which are individual physical events occurring in space and time, acts performed by *speakers*. It is common to talk about utterances of a given linguistic object \(X\) without venturing any proposal about the relation between \(X\) and individual utterances, signings or inscriptions of

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\(^5\) I maintain that (3)-(5) are well-formed only relative to one or other theoretical use of ‘means’. See below.
X—for example, that such individuals are physical instantiations or tokens of X (whatever that means). For present purposes, I shall do the same—though I think there are serious problems in this realm that need to be addressed—and if I slip into talking about the linguistic properties of an utterance (which I hope I won’t) this should be mentally repaired or construed as shorthand for talk of linguistic properties of the sentence uttered. So, to talk about the sentence ‘snow is white’ is to talk about an abstract object; to talk about a particular utterance, signing, or inscription of ‘snow is white’ is to talk about a physical event or event. So examples (1)-(11) describe properties of abstract objects, semantic properties. Semantics, on this account, makes no claims about particular manifestations (as I shall call them) of linguistic objects or about the acts that bring about such manifestations, whether these are taken to be acts of (e.g.) speaking, signing, and writing, or acts of (e.g.) uttering, gesturing, and inscribing. Nor does semantics make any claims about the people performing these acts, whether these are taken to be (e.g.) speakers, signers, and writers, or (e.g.) utterers, gesturers, and inscribers. (If you are tempted to say at this point that these two claims are falsified by the fact that deictic or indexical expressions (e.g. ‘I’, ‘you’, ‘here’, ‘now’ ‘he’, ‘she’, ‘this’, and ‘that’) have meanings that semantics must investigate, I simply ask you to bear with me a while. I do not deny that such expressions have meanings that semantics must investigate, but it does not follow, I maintain, that semantics makes any claims about particular utterances (etc.) or speakers (etc.).

Pragmatics, by contrast, has a great deal to say about speakers (etc.) and utterances (etc.). If semantics concerns what sentences (phrases, words) mean, pragmatics might be thought to concern what speakers and utterances mean. No doubt some such thought lies behind the common identification of a pragmatic theory with a theory of utterance interpretation, a cognitive theory about how interpreters form hypotheses about what speakers mean by uttering the things they do on particular occasions. Following Grice, it is common to provide illustrations of speaker meaning using sentences such as the following:⁶

(12) By uttering ‘There is no largest prime number’, the teacher means that there is no largest prime number.
(13) By uttering ‘Tom has neat handwriting and is punctual’, Sam meant that Tom was no good at philosophy.
(14) By uttering ‘I admire her’, Sam meant that he admired Mary.
(15) By uttering, ‘Mary’s team lost’, Sam meant that the basketball team Mary coaches lost last night.
(16) By uttering ‘It rained the whole day’, Sam meant that it rained in Bergen the whole day yesterday.
(17) By yawning ostentatiously, Sam meant that she was tired.

(12) and (13) are the sorts of examples sometimes used to illustrate two seemingly anodyne points, viz. that in some cases, “a speaker means exactly what the sentence he utters means,”

⁶ See (e.g.) Grice (1957, 1969), Schiffer (1972, 1982).
and in other cases “a speaker means something quite different from what the sentence he utters means”. But some care is needed here. Someone claiming that the crucial contrast between the scenarios described by (12) and (13) is that in the former “the speaker means exactly what the sentence he utters means” appears to be suggesting that there is there is something that is both what the sentence ‘There is no largest prime number’ means and what the teacher meant by uttering it, i.e. something that the sentence ‘There is no largest prime number’ and the teacher uttering it both mean. I suspect we can characterize the contrast without going quite this far, so I propose for now to say that (12) illustrates the fact that what a speaker means may “bear an especially close, systematic relation to” the meaning of the sentence uttered, whereas example (13) illustrates the fact that what a speaker means may bear no such close relation to the meaning of the sentence uttered.

Examples (14)-(16) are the sorts of examples sometimes used to illustrate a rather important and robust point: knowing what a sentence means does not automatically put one in a position to know what a speaker means by uttering that sentence on a given occasion. (This And (17) illustrates that a speaker—or, rather, an utterer in Grice’s broad sense—can mean something without uttering a sentence at all.

So we have just two notions of meaning in play, speaker meaning and expression meaning:

(SM) What a speaker S means by uttering an expression X on a given occasion.

(XM) What X itself means.

We cannot dictate in advance that no other notions of meaning are needed. But I shall refrain from giving examples that might be thought to provide illustrations of utterance meaning. I have two reasons. First, I am not convinced such a notion is needed to explain whatever it is we want to explain (about which I have said virtually nothing so far). Second, many philosophers and linguists whose prose superficially suggests they are talking talking about a notion of utterance meaning seem either to be talking about one or the other of SM and XM, or else sliding carelessly between the two (with predictably dire results).

3. A MASTER QUESTION

The fact that a distinction between two notions of meaning (e.g. XM and SM), or a distinction between two ways of meaning (e.g. saying and implicating) may be used to provide intuitively satisfying descriptions of contrasting situations does not constitute mastery of theoretically significant concepts or guarantee the concepts coherent rôles in theories of anything we are trying to explain. For that, we would need two more things. First, we need to articulate clearly the substantive questions and the empirical facts we are proposing to explain using the concepts in question. (If we are unable to do this, we have no rejoinder to claims that we are just philosophers spinning our wheels.) Second, we need to characterize precisely not only the invoked notions themselves but also the relations they
bear to one another and to other theoretical notions in a conceptual nexus. (For example, any useful notion of saying will likely be connected to notions of referring and predicking.)

Various notions and distinctions appealed to in theorising about language and communication have a basis in intuition and, relatedly, various terms we use for theoretical notions have a basis in their pre-theoretical usage. Quite why there is so much sanctimonious blather at the moment about the evils of intuitive notions and intuitive judgments in philosophy is a mystery. To the best of my knowledge, no-one claims that theoretical terms must be hostage to “ordinary”, “common”, or “intuitively correct” usage or that theoretical notions must be hostage to “ordinary” or “common” intuitions, contrary to what some of the blather assumes. In theorising about language and communication, it can hardly come as a surprise that among the expressions that have helped us to get up and running are verbs such as ‘mean’, ‘say’, ‘imply’, ‘refer’, ‘communicate’, ‘interpret’ and ‘understand’. A nexus of core theoretical notions may well include notions of meaning, saying, implying, referring, communicating, interpreting, and understanding, but the philosophical deployment of such notions cannot afford to be shackled by purportedly “ordinary”, “common”, or “intuitively correct” uses of a handful of English verbs. Philosophical investigations have to begin somewhere, and in their early staged they will have to draw upon language we are already comfortable using, so it is hardly surprising that ‘say’, ‘mean’, ‘imply’, ‘refer’, ‘communicate’, ‘interpret’, and ‘understand’ have figured so prominently in philosophical investigations of language and communication. And it is not surprising that some of these verbs have been squeezed out of certain discussions as work has progressed, sometimes being replaced by words deemed to be cleaner by virtue of having stipulated uses in theoretical contexts, albeit uses often best described for a while with words that have already been, or are about to be, squeezed out.

It has proved tempting to many people to formulate the substantive questions and the empirical facts we are proposing to explain by taking it for granted that expressions of natural languages have representational properties or meanings. The attempt to specify these meanings and the relation the meanings of expressions bear to the meanings of their parts and the ways the parts are assembled (syntax) has developed into a major intellectual project attracting the attention of linguists, philosophers, logicians, and cognitive scientists. But there is empirical substance to this project only if meanings are the sorts of properties of expressions that can be exploited by those who use the expressions (producers/senders and consumers/receivers), properties that play rôles in explanations of users’ behavior, properties users can appreciate, if only in some subdoxastic way that we are striving to understand. That is, the project has empirical substance only to the extent that it forms a component of a more encompassing project, which may be characterized in terms of a master question whose intelligibility orients and underpins the worth of the enterprises that fly under the flags “philosophy of language” and “semantics of natural language”, a question in the service of which all of our empirical questions about language and communication are ultimately asked:
We produce various noises, marks, and gestures, and in so-doing manage to express or sharpen our thoughts, and to communicate information about the external world or about our own beliefs, desires, plans, commitments, hopes, fears, feelings etc. efficiently (i.e. quickly, systematically and consistently). What facts about the noises, marks, and gestures we produce and exploit, what facts about our cognitive apparatus, and what facts about our physical circumstances and social relations explain this extraordinary capacity? Neale (2011: 9).

In our attempts to express ourselves or communicate, things sometimes go horribly, embarrassingly wrong, of course; but the striking fact is how often they don’t, and this is a large part of what needs explaining. (If a proposal in semantic theory cannot be construed as part of an answer to this master questions, then there is nothing for the proposal even to be about.)

The verb ‘mean’ does not appear in the statement of our master question. But the verbs ‘express’ and ‘communicate’ do, the latter accompanied by the noun ‘information’. Plausibly, explicating the relevant notion of information will require invoking some notion of content that is relevant to the individuation of certain types of mental states and the acts they engender, but it would be a mistake to claim that a notion of linguistic meaning lurks in the question itself. Of course, there is a popular view in the philosophy of mind that having beliefs (and other propositional attitudes) involves being in computational relations to “sentences” of Mentalese (or the Language of Thought), a “language” whose representational properties or “semantics” philosophy and cognitive science are trying to explicate, but the popularity of a view of the mind that helps itself to terms like ‘sentence’, ‘language’, and ‘semantics’ is hardly a reason by itself to claim that a notion of linguistic meaning is smuggled into all talk of mental states.7

Speaker meaning—or at least utterer’s meaning in Grice’s extended sense—is another matter altogether. Communication does not have to involve anything usefully called a language—which we might, as a first shot, equate with a special type of system of noises, gestures, or marks—and we cannot jut write off the possibility that an account of non-linguistic human communication will be a vital component of an account of linguistic communication. Some philosophers, most notably Grice and those he has influenced, have suggested that theoretical inquiries into the nature of language and communication should begin with an examination of speaker meaning, the fruits of which should then be used to

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7 There is an unhelpful tendency these days to talk about mental states referring to things and call the content of a mental state its referential content, as if there were some referential relation a mental state bears to its own content, which is a rather odd thing to say given that mental states are typically individuated in terms of their contents. It is enough to say that beliefs have content, have truth conditions, or represent states of affairs. There is no upside to saying that they refer to these things or stand in referential relations to them. (I have a body, I have a mind. It would be odd to restate this by saying that I refer to (or stand in a referential relation to) my own body or my own mind.) There may well be a point to saying that believing that Wellington is the capital of New Zealand is a way of entertaining a proposition. But it sounds plain silly to say that the proposition refers to its own content: on such a view, a proposition would refer to itself, for a proposition just is its own content. The point carries over to sub-propositional contents. There is no upside to saying that beliefs (or their parts, if they have them) refer to things the beliefs are about. My belief that Wellington is the capital of New Zealand is a belief about Wellington (and about New Zealand). Why restate this by saying that my belief (or part of it) refers to Wellington? We already have all the vocabulary we need without dragging in the overworked verb ‘refer’. Another unfortunate tendency these days is to talk of a person referring mentally to a thing. Again, the verb ‘refer’ seems out of place. It is a far more natural and less misleading to talk of a person thinking about a thing. Our master question certainly does not assume the existence of objects (linguistic or mental) that refer to things. It simply assumes something no-one doubts: the existence of beliefs and other mental states that are about things.
shed light on linguistic meaning, rather than vice versa. It is, after all, what people mean, rather than what their words mean, that concern us in ordinary conversation and in many other situations in which we encounter language in our daily lives. This is not to deny that there are times when the exact words used are important—when we read Acts of Parliament, statutes, or constitutions, for example; when listening to trial testimony; when reading novels and (especially) poetry, where imagery or feelings may be connected to uses of particular words or strings of words (often in ways we have difficulty explaining prosaically). Nor is it to deny the obvious fact that we attribute meaning when we encounter inscriptions of words and have no idea who produced them; or when we look at inscriptions (or pixel formations) that we know have been generated by a computer; or when we see (seeming) inscriptions of words in the sand and know they have been formed by nothing more than the wind. But in much of daily life words are means to ends. And, importantly, so are their meanings. Only in special cases are we interested in word meanings per se. Doubtless, the meanings of words are things we register (if only subdoxastically) when we encounter speech, things implicated in the largely non-conscious cognitive computations that serve up hypotheses about what speakers mean. But it is striking that much of the time we do not retain the exact form of words the speaker used, even when we remember what we took the speaker to mean, and this fact ought to drop out as a consequence of an adequate answer to our master question.

Of course, it would be absurd to think we will not, at some point, need to invoke the idea of linguistic objects having meanings and work out how the meanings of expressions are related to the meanings of their parts and their modes of construction. For although our master question does not itself mention such abstractions as words, phrases, and sentences, obviously it is in the use of sounds, gestures, or marks, construed as physical manifestations of such entities, themselves construed as possessing somewhat stable meanings, that we find the lion’s share of the efficiency the question mentions. The Gricean does not deny this, maintaining, rather, that the efficiency flows from the fact that a language is a system of self-perpetuating regularities (conventions) in acts of speaker meaning, all facts about the meanings of individual linguistic objects being reducible to facts about the contents of psychological states of their users. The efficiency does not amount to simple pairings of linguistic objects and messages of the sort found in simple signalling systems or in certain artificial languages: in natural language, a single linguistic object, with a single stable meaning, can be used in different situations to communicate different information, even abstracting from observable facts about the situations of its use. So if there are pairings of interest, they will concern linguistic objects and types of messages.

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8 Grice (1957, 1969, 1989), Strawson (1964), Schiffer (1972, 1982), Bach and Harnish (1979), Loar (1981), Sperber and Wilson (1986, 2002), Neale (1992, 2004), Wilson and Sperber (2002, 1012). There is an (allegedly) prior issue about the function (or the purpose) of language, a question that has generated more heat than light in both philosophy and linguistics. But surely it is enough to appreciate that we both express ourselves in language and communicate with it, and that an answer to our master question must explain both linguistic self-expression and linguistic communication. It seems doubtful to me that we can provide an explanation of one independently of providing an explanation of the other, and quite likely that an understanding of the relation between self-expression and communication will emerge as interlocking theories and sub-theories evolve in attempting to answer our master question the relation consisting in little more than the way each is explained by reference to the other.
One important task is the construction of an architecture within which our master question can be addressed fruitfully, an architecture within which we can identify and link the answers to a host of “lower-level” questions, and produce and suspend interlocking theories and sub-theories— theories of speaker meaning, sentence meaning, word meaning, saying, and implying, for example; theories of phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantic composition; sub-theories of referring, predicating, binding, quantification, anaphora, tense, aspect, and prosody. But it is important to recognize that neither the architecture itself, nor any of these lower-level questions, nor any of the theories suspended within it needs to be mentioned in order to say what our master question is.

4. MEANING VS. INTERPRETING

Although the verb ‘mean’ does not occur in the expression of our master question, two activities are assumed that we are naturally inclined to describe using precisely this verb:

(1) An utterer, $S$, meaning something by uttering something, $X$, on a particular occasion (e.g. by producing certain noises, gestures, or marks).

(2) An interpreter identifying (or at least forming a hypothesis about) what $S$ means by uttering $X$ on a particular occasion.

So before we even float the idea of theories about systems of noises, marks, or gestures that have meaning, we are, simply by asking our master question, already assuming a distinction between

(1’) Theories that concern acts of meaning, and

(2’) Theories that concern interpreting acts of meaning.

The idea of interpreting behavior makes little sense in the absence of a problem to be solved or a question to be answered. We reflexively generate hypotheses about the things we perceive—objects, events, actions, whatever. This includes especially the behaviour of conspecifics, which often enough we take to be backed by reasons. As Sperber and Wilson have stressed, to interpret an action is to form a hypothesis about the intentions behind it, the intentions that explain it. When the interpreter has done that—and does not go on to revise the hypothesis—the interpretive problem is taken to be solved. As it is often put, interpreting behaviour is a form of mindreading, construed as the capacity non-demonstratively to infer the mental states of others (e.g. their beliefs, goals, intentions) from their behaviour. The behavior in question will be compatible with all sorts of different hypotheses about the intentions behind it—a standard case of an empirical hypothesis being underdetermined by the available evidence.

Interpreting an utterance is a special case of interpreting intentional behaviour. To produce an utterance is to perform (or make as if to perform) an act of meaning, to engage in communicative behaviour. To interpret such behaviour is to form a hypothesis about

certain intentions behind the utterance, a hypotheses about what the utterer means. To this extent it is a special form of mindreading. And it is hard to see how there could be any substance whatsoever to the notion of what the speaker means by uttering something, X, (on a given occasion) that does not take its content to be a function of certain mental states the speaker had in uttering X. The usual story, originally pushed by Grice (1957, 1969), is that meaning something by uttering something is a special kind of intending, communicative behaviour being not just intentional but intended to be recognized as such and more. The complexity of a given communicative intention, as such intentions are often called, does not alter the fact that communicative behaviour will be compatible with all sorts of different hypotheses reasonable interpreters could make about the intentions behind it. And, to this extent, there is no guarantee the interpretation an audience comes up with will capture what the speaker intended. Interpretation, as Sperber and Wilson stress, always involves a risk.

Facts about nonlinguistic communication may well shed light on linguistic communication. But it cannot be sensibly denied that interpreting a linguistic utterance—or, rather, interpreting an utterance of a sentence belonging to a language one knows—is a special case of interpreting an utterance, a special case of a special case of mindreading, steered or guided or constrained by one’s understanding of the language in question. (Presumably, a proprietary body of information—knowledge of the language—is implicated in some way in both the production and interpretation processes.) Nonetheless, the interpreter’s goal—what he or she appears to be built to do—is the same whether interpreting a linguistic or non-linguistic utterance: identifying what the utterer meant. To interpret an utterance, linguistic or otherwise, is to form a hypothesis about exactly this. And the linguistic nature of an utterance does not alter the fact that the communicative behaviour itself will be compatible with all sorts of different hypotheses reasonable interpreters could make about the intentions behind it. And, to this extent, the there is still no guarantee the interpretation an audience comes up with will capture what the speaker intended.

In a communicative situation, A’s and S’s goals—understanding and being understood, respectively—are dovetailed and the ways ways in which S and A operate mutually sustaining. And to this extent, there is simply no possibility of making sense of A’s capacity to interpret S’s utterances without making sense of S’s capacity to exploit this capacity of A’s, and vice versa. This is why producing a theory of interpretation is so intimately bound up with producing a theory of meaning.

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10 Understanding the word ‘mean’ as meaning intend traces back at least to Anglo-Saxon. The vestiges of this are found with the German meinen, meaning think or intend.

11 Typically, in interpreting ordinary speech the rôle of conscious reflection is so negligible, or at least so imperceptible, that it is tempting to say, with Fodor, that fast, automatic, unreflective, reflexive cognitive operations serve up an interpretation that will be “accepted” unless or until there is conscious reason to doubt it—because of, say, puzzlement induced by the speaker’s next remark. It’s just the way we’re built, cognitively speaking. (Sometimes we are in the position of interpreting our past selves, so to speak, as when we read things we wrote long ago.)
5. THE CONSTITUTION OF SPEAKER MEANING

According to Grice, (1) the most basic notion of meaning needed to theorise fruitfully about language, meaning, and communication, is the the notion of what a speaker, S, means by uttering a sentence, X, on a given occasion, and (2) the propositional content of what S means is wholly determined by certain intentions S had in uttering X, which Grice calls M-intentions (‘M’ for ‘meaning’), an M-intention being (roughly) an intention to get an audience to believe (or do) something on the basis of recognising that he or she is so-intended.

I shall say more about (1) later. For the moment, I shall just say that on the face of it a theoretical examination of linguistic meaning does not obviously require being equipped with a prior account of speaker meaning. To be sure, the meaning a given word X has within a linguistic community at a given time will be a function of how X has been used up to that point. And X’s meaning at a given point constrains how X will be used in the immediate future; and future usage may result in X having a slightly or (substantially) different meaning at a later time. And perhaps no good philosophical description of this process can be provided without adverting to the notion of what a speaker means by uttering X on a given occasion. But this hardly constitutes an argument to the conclusion that a theoretical examination of linguistic meaning cannot proceed intelligibly without a prior account of speaker meaning. Nonetheless, there are good reasons to think the conclusion is true, as will become clear.

It is (2) that concerns me right now. (2) is a thesis in metaphysics, a thesis about the constitutive determination (or constitution) of the content of speaker meaning, a specification of the facts in virtue of which S meant that p by uttering X on a given occasion, an answer to the following question:

CQ In virtue of what facts is it the case that S means whatever it is he means by uttering something, X, on a given occasion?

For present purposes, the following can serve as a Gricean answer, reading ‘P iff Q’ as a strict (i.e. modal) biconditional—the truth of which requires P and Q to have the same truth conditions (not just the same truth values, as would be the case if we were to read it as a mere material biconditional):12

(G) S means that p by uttering X iff for some audience, A, and for some feature f, S uttered X intending

(1) A to think that X has f and, at least partly on the basis of thinking this, infer that S uttered X intending A to think that p, and

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12 The strict biconditional, symbolized as ⇔, is modal in the sense that (P ⇔ Q) is equivalent to □(P→Q), where ↔ is the material biconditional.
(2) A’s recognition that $S$ uttered $X$ intending $A$ to think that $p$ to function, at least in part, as a reason for $A$ to think that $p$.$^{13}$

More or less following Grice, we can abbreviate the right-hand side of (1): for some audience $A$, $S$ uttered $X M$-intending $A$ to think that $p$ (or that $A$ thinks that $p$). Pragmatists can disagree about the precise nature and structure of meaning intentions (often called communicative intentions). Elaborations and refinements have come from Stephen Schiffer, Kent Bach, Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson and others, but the underlying idea has remained a robust (quite likely ineliminable) component of theorising about language and communication, even for the renegade Schiffer (1986).$^{14}$ For what it’s worth, I am inclined to take the requisite notion to be be importantly weaker and less complex than Grice’s notion of an M-intention, but I am not going to pursue that matter here.$^{15}$

The connective ‘iff’ is symmetric, indeed commutative, whether read materially or strictly.$^{16}$ Since the symmetry makes a biconditional weaker than is required in many philosophical contexts, we often impose an explanatory asymmetry on its interpretation, and we are in such a context here. To interpret (1) as answering CQ is to go beyond accepting its truth, beyond regarding the right-hand side as specifying conditions that are necessary and sufficient for the truth of the left-hand side. There is no explanatory asymmetry in talk of necessary and sufficient conditions per se as the left-hand side specifies a condition that is necessary and sufficient for the truth of the right-hand side. Any explanatory asymmetry we read into, say, (1), is something we impose. And when we do that, we are treating (1) as providing an analysis, explanation, explication, or account of a target notion, which, by convention, we take to be specified on the left-hand side, the analysandum, explanandum, or explicandum, the right-hand side spelling out the analysans, explanans or explicans.$^{17}$ In (1), the explicandum is $S$ meaning that $p$ by uttering $X$. The imposed asymmetry—imposed because it is no part of the meaning of ‘iff’—reflects the fact that someone putting forth (1) is attempting to explain, explicate, or expound one thing, viz. speaker meaning, in terms of others, viz. intending, thinking, and recognizing.

It is surely the imposed explanatory asymmetry that engenders talk of semantic or conceptual analysis. But this is metaphysics not semantics or conceptual analysis. To endorse (1) and impose the aforementioned explanatory asymmetry on its interpretation is

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$^{13}$ In my opinion, the three occurrences of ‘$A$ to think that $p$’ in (G) need to be replaced by ‘$A$ to think that $p$ (or that $S$ thinks that $p$)’, but in the interests of keeping things simple I have prescinded from this important detail.

$^{14}$ Accepting a broadly Gricean conception of speaker meaning does not mean accepting that sentence meaning is reducible to speaker meaning. See below. An interesting twist here is Devitt (forthcoming), according to whom (a) sentence meaning is reducible to speaker’s meaning, but (b) speaker meaning is not to be analysed in terms of speakers’ meaning intentions.

$^{15}$ The most sustained attempt to work out a true biconditional of this general form, is surely Schiffer (1972). With Fodor and Schiffer, I am inclined to think that there are no bulletproof philosophical biconditionals. But that does not render attempts to formulate them pointless. In fact, I think such attempts are good ways of elucidating many of our concepts, at least if they are read the right way.

$^{16}$ $(P \iff Q)$ is equivalent to $(Q \iff P)$

$^{17}$ If used in connection with real definition—which is of things rather than words—definiendum and definiens can be added.
not to endorse the idea that the right-hand side gives the meaning of the left-hand side.\textsuperscript{18} It is, rather, to endorse an account of what it is for \( S \) to mean that \( p \) by uttering \( X \), an account of the nature or constitution of speaker meaning. It is not hard to make this explicit. We could just stipulate that (1) is shorthand for one of the following (in which the commutative binary connective ‘iff’ is replaced by material that might be treated as a complex non-commutative binary connective (underlined)):

\( (1a) \) \( S \) means that \( p \) by uttering \( X \) because (or in virtue of the fact that) for some audience, \( A \), \( S \) uttered \( X \) intending \( A \) to think that \( p \) (or that \( A \) thinks that \( p \)).

\( (1b) \) The fact that \( S \) means that \( p \) by uttering \( X \) obtains in virtue of the fact that for some audience, \( A \), \( S \) uttered \( X \) intending \( A \) etc.

\( (1c) \) For it to be the case that \( S \) means that \( p \) by uttering \( X \) is for it to be the case that there is some audience \( A \) such that \( S \) uttered \( X \) intending \( A \) etc.

\( (1d) \) What makes it the case that \( S \) means that \( p \) by uttering \( X \) is that there is some audience \( A \) such that \( S \) uttered \( X \) intending \( A \) etc.

\( (1e) \) The nature of \( S \) meaning that \( p \) by uttering \( X \) is there being some audience \( A \) such that \( S \) uttered \( X \) intending \( A \) etc.\textsuperscript{19}

It is here that we find the most common and most serious of the conflations that bother me, conflations that stem from failures to appreciate something that several people, myself included, have been stressing for many years, something I mentioned in the introduction:

the need to separate \( [1] \) the metaphysical or (constitutive) question concerning what determines (or fixes) what [a speaker] means and \( [2] \) the epistemological (or evidential) question concerning what is used by those other than [the speaker] to identify what [the speaker] means (a question to be answered by a theory of interpretation) (Neale 2005: 180; 2004: 76).\textsuperscript{20}

The Gricean account of speaker meaning is presented as an answer to the metaphysical-constitutive question, [1]. But Griceans have much to say about question [2], the epistemological-evidential or, more briefly, epistemic question, which concerns interpretation rather than just meaning, though Grice himself is frequently misinterpreted here, as will become clear.\textsuperscript{21} The important point to notice here is that in offering an answer to CQ, the Gricean story makes no mention of \( A \)’s actual ability to interpret \( X \) and no mention of such things as the context of utterance, the topic of conversation, background information, discourse structure, salience, relevance, conversational maxims, pragmatic inference, social conventions, norms, or practices, community standards, expert opinions, causal chains, or even linguistic meaning. This is because what \( S \) meant is wholly

\textsuperscript{18} Hence the qualification about using definiendum and definiens.

\textsuperscript{19} (1e) was suggested by Michael Devitt.


\textsuperscript{21} It was in reading distorted discussions of Grice’s work in the literature that my thinking on these matters crystalized.
constitutively determined by $S$’s meaning intentions in uttering $X$. Certainly one is free to argue that this is wrong, and that is something that can be debated. But it would be a mistake to complain that the Gricean answer smuggles in facts about $A$ or about the context of utterance, the topic of conversation, background information, discourse structure, salience, relevance, conversational maxims, pragmatic inference, etc: to think such facts are smuggled into (1) involves conflating CQ with one or other of two quite different questions that I will discuss later. The first is this:

PQ What sources of information and what types of cognitive operations drive the (typically spontaneous) formation of $A$’s interpretive hypotheses about what $S$ means by uttering $X$ on a given occasion?

Whereas CQ is a metaphysical question about speaker meaning, PQ is an epistemic question about speaker meaning, or rather about the attempted identification of speaker meaning by $A$, a question in cognitive psychology, the philosophy of mind, and epistemology, an empirical question investigated by pragmatics. CQ and PQ are often run together in the literature (as are the corresponding constitutive and epistemic questions about what $S$ says and implicates, which I follow Grice in construing as parts of what $S$ means). Furthermore, answers to constitutive and epistemic questions about meaning, saying and implicating are also conflated with answers to questions of a third type, formatic questions about the factors involved in the “planning” of utterances. In particular, CQ and PQ are sometimes conflated with:

FQ What types of cognitive constraints are there on the pairing of a meaning intention $M$ and a sentence $X$ in order for $S$ to utter $X$ with $M$?

An appreciation of the dovetailed, mutually sustaining goals of $A$ and $S$—understanding and being understood, respectively—drives all work in the Gricean tradition. If $A$’s goal in interpreting an utterance of $X$ is understanding, construed as the identification of what $S$ seeks to communicate by uttering $X$, then it is hard to see how interpretation can be anything other than an inferential process of inverse engineering. At the same time, if $S$’s goal in uttering $X$ is $A$’s identification of what $S$ seeks to communicate by uttering it, then production is a process that is (a) premised on precisely the possibility of such inverse engineering and (b) informed by the inferential processes sustaining it. (Questions about the psychological processes involved in both the interpretation and the planning of utterances are often treated as questions in pragmatics. But ‘pragmatic theory’ and ‘theory of utterance interpretation’ are often used interchangeably, so I’ll distinguish pragmatics, strictly speaking, from formatics, which concerns utterance planning. On this usage, formatics and pragmatics are one another’s flip sides. Pragmatics seeks to answer PQ, formatics seeks to answer FQ.)

Grice himself is careful to avoid conflating constitutive, pragmatic and formatic questions. Moreover, he appears to appreciate how answers to questions of these three types must interlock and how an answer to a question of one type may be constrained answers to
questions of another type. This was something I was pointing to in my review of Grice’s book, where I said that on his account,

[there is] a distinction between (i) accounts of what S said and what S meant by uttering X, and (ii) accounts of how hearers recover [emphasis added] what S said and what S meant by uttering X. . . What S meant by uttering X is determined [emphasis added] solely by S’s communicative intentions; but of course the formation of genuine communicative intentions by S is constrained by S’s expectations: S cannot be said to utter X M-intending A [audience] to φ [e.g. M-intending A to believe that p] if S thinks that there is very little or no hope that S’s production of X will result in A φ-ing . . . S’s conception [emphasis added] of such things as the context of utterance, the topic of conversation, background information, and A’s ability to work out what S is up to may all play rôles in the formation of S’s [communicative] intentions; but this does not undermine the view that what determines [emphasis added] what S means are S’s communicative intentions. (Neale, 1992: 552-3).

Developing these remarks will provide much of what I need to deal with specific, widespread and seemingly entrenched confusions sustaining ill-conceived debates about what “determines” the content of what is said.

6. TWO WAYS OF MEANING

There are many situations in which we are apt to say that what a speaker means by uttering X on a given occasion bears no direct relationship to what X itself means. Grice pioneered the theoretical description of such situations, and elaborating one of his most famous examples serves to bring out vividly a number of important points—not all appreciated by those who invoke or criticise Grice’s work in their own. We are to imagine that a speaker, S, has been asked by someone else, A, for a succinct appraisal of one of S’s students, Jones, who has applied for a position at A’s institution. All S says is,

(1) Jones has excellent handwriting and is always punctual.

In this scenario, A will have little difficulty inferring what S seeks to convey, what S means, on this particular occasion, by uttering (1). S is “damning with faint praise”. If A is asked to specify in a single sentence what it is S means, he might well pick one of the following:

(2) Jones is not a good choice for the position
(3) There are better candidates than Jones for the position
(4) Jones is not a good philosopher
(5) Jones is not very bright.

Sometimes I talk about interpreters or addressees rather than audiences, though there are, of course, important differences that are worth analysing. (I construe interpreters etc. in modality-neutral ways, individuals being potential interpreters etc. by virtue of being listeners (rather than mere hearers) or watchers (rather than mere seers).) Suppose four people are dining together in a restaurant. Quite likely there will times when one of the diners, S, is openly addressing one of the others, A, while the remaining two are openly members of his audience but not themselves S’s addressees, in the intended sense. Someone at an adjacent table could well be an interpreter without being part of S’s audience, let alone S’s addressee. But that person could certainly become part of the audience or become an addressee. Examining the conditions under which someone is an addressee, audience, or interpreter would take us too far astray here. So would comparing cases involving readers rather than listeners. Suffice to say that for present purposes I shall simply stipulate that someone can be an interpreter of an utterance without being an intended interpreter, and that an addressee is one type of intended interpreter; and an audience another.
There are several important points worth making immediately about this case.

(a) **Indirectness.** $S$ chose a rather ‘indirect’, ‘circuitous’, ‘roundabout’ or ‘elliptical’ way of letting $A$ know what he thought of Jones. He *avoided* making his point directly. And there is a seemingly modal dimension to this talk of avoidance: the speaker *could have used* some alternative form of words and thereby made his point more directly, less circuitously or elliptically, in a less roundabout fashion. For example, $S$ could have uttered any of (2)-(5).

(b) **Interpretational Openness.** Conceivably, $A$ is unlikely to have any strong reason to think that exactly one of sentences (2)-(5) has some privileged status, that exactly one of them provides a correct specification of how $S$ himself conceived of what he meant, or of how $S$ would characterize what he meant if asked to do so using a single sentence of English.

(c) **Authorial Openness.** Conceivably, there is no fact of the matter as to which of (2)-(5), or any other number of sentences, provides a correct specification of how $S$ himself conceived of what he meant at the time he uttered (1), even if there turns out to be some sentence or other, perhaps one of (2)-(5), that $S$ would, upon reflection, regard as best characterizing what he meant.

Consider an alternative scenario in which $S$ uses sentence (2) in response to $A$’s original request for an appraisal of Jones. It would be fine to describe the situation using (2′):

(2′) **By saying, ‘Jones is not a good choice for the position, $S$ means** that Jones is not a good choice for the position.

But notice it would also be fine to describe the situation disquotationally, as it were, using sentence (2″):

(2″) **By saying, ‘Jones is not a good choice for the position’, $S$ is saying** that Jones is not a good choice for the position.

(Here, it would not be scandalous to replace the first occurrence of ‘saying’ by ‘uttering’, and the second by ‘stating’.) But $S$ did *not* use sentence (2), he used sentence (1), and while it is fine to describe the situation using (1′),

(1′) **By saying, ‘Jones has excellent handwriting and is always punctual’, $S$ means** that Jones is not a good choice for the position,

it is *not* fine to describe it using (1″):

(1″) *By saying, ‘Jones has excellent handwriting and is always punctual’, $S$ is saying** that Jones is not a good choice for the position.

So we appear to have found two ways in which $S$ may mean something. To *say (state)* something is to mean something in a rather direct, conventional way, as characterized in (2′). But $S$ may mean something in a less direct, less conventionalized manner; that is, $S$ may *imply (suggest/insinuate)* something, and this is surely what is going on in the original situation, which it is fine to describe as follows:
(1") By saying, ‘Jones has excellent handwriting and is always punctual’, S is
implying that Jones is not a good choice for the position.

We might summarise these preliminary thoughts thus: By saying, ‘Jones has excellent
handwriting and is always punctual’, (a) S means that Jones is not a good choice for the
position, (b) S is not saying that Jones is not a good choice for the position, and (c) S is
implying that Jones is not a good choice for the position. Grice (1975) calls this type of
speaker implication a conversational implicature. In the example, S conversationally
implies that Jones is not a good choice for the position.

7. MEANING VS. COMMUNICATING

There is an unfortunate tendency on the part of some philosophers (i) to conflate what S
means and what S communicates (or to conflate, in their terms, what an utterance means and
what an utterance communicates), or (ii) to think that Grice analyses meaning in terms of
communication. Jason Stanley (2002: 323 &-326-330), for example, appears both to
conflates notions of what is meant and what is communicated and to say that Grice took the
notion of what is said to be “analyzed in terms of notions such as what is
communicated.” (2002: 323). In fact, as noted already, for Grice the notion of what S says is
to be analysed in terms of the notion of what S means (see Part II for more detail) and what
S means is certainly not to be analyzed in terms of what S communicates, indeed quite the
reverse, as can be shown quite easily. Communication, in the relevant sense, is something
that takes place between two agents. And while the verb ‘communicate’ does not actually
require four arguments to form a sentence—witness ‘Sam communicated with Tom’, and
‘Sam communicated her message clearly’—in theoretical settings we often wish to construe
it as expressing a four-place relation between a speaker, an addressee, a propositional
content, and an act of meaning, as in (1) and (2):

(1) [Sam] communicated [to Tom] [np that she wished to leave] [by uttering the
sentence, ‘I’m tired’]

(2) [Sam] communicated [np her view of the matter] [to Tom] [by rolling her
eyes].

Confusion is inevitable if meaning and communication are not distinguished. S may mean
something without actually communicating it, for an act of meaning that p will not count as
an act of communicating that p if A does not “secure uptake”. That is, success on the
speaker’s side requires success on the addressee’s side.

Grice certainly does not conflate meaning and communication. Nor does he analyse
meaning in terms of communication, as some have claimed. Indeed quite the reverse. It is
tempting to put forward the following:

23 Notice the natural transposition of the addressee and content arguments in (1) and (2).
(3) $S$ communicated to $A$ that $p$ by uttering $X$ (on a given occasion) iff (a) $S$ meant that $p$ by uttering $X$ (on that occasion), and (b) $A$ interpreted $S$ as meaning that $p$ by uttering $X$ (on that occasion).

But perhaps certain cases in which $A$ does not realize that he is the addressee are unduly swept up by the right hands side of (3), requiring us to put forward something more like (4), assuming ‘recognize’ to be a factive verb):

(4) $S$ communicated to $A$ that $p$ by uttering $X$ (on a given occasion) iff $A$ recognised that $S$ uttered $X$ M-intending $A$ to believe that $p$ (or that $S$ believes that $p$).

Probably some mention of time frames would be needed too. If, for example, $A$ is slow on the uptake, $S$ may mean that $p$ by uttering $X$ but fail to communicate that $p$ until such time as the penny drops. In any event, I don’t propose to spend any more time on this exercise.

Just as we can distinguish meaning and communicating, we can distinguish interpreting and understanding: an act of interpreting an act of meaning is an attempt to understand it, i.e. an attempt to identify what the speaker means. So let us use ‘mean’, ‘communicate’, ‘interpret’ and ‘understand’ as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Utterer</th>
<th>Audience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Act Type:</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act Goal:</td>
<td>Communicating</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. SAID BY WHAT?

The saying/implicating distinction—which Grice (1961) originally marked out using ‘state’ and ‘imply’—is meant to reflect, to some extent, a common intuition about our own use of language. Nevertheless, ‘say’ and ‘implicate’ are technical terms for Grice, and it is speakers who say and implicate—not sentences, sentences in use, or particular utterances or tokens or uses of sentences—saying and implicating being two ways in which a speaker may mean something. It is usually an indication of a poor grasp of Grice’s work when one finds an author talking about Grice’s ideas about what a particular sentence or a particular utterance, token or use of a sentence says (or about what such a beast conversationally implicates!). Both points bear spelling out.

Early in his 1967 William James lectures, Grice says “I shall, for the time being at least, have to assume to a considerable extent an intuitive understanding of the meaning of ‘say’.” (1975: 44; 1989: 24-25). Nonetheless, ‘say’ is to be a technical term—one he “expect[s] to be of greater theoretical utility than some other sense of ‘say’ would be” (1989: 121)—and he stresses that he needs an explication of his “favoured, and maybe in some degree artificial, sense” (1968: 225; 1989: 118) and “a clarification of its relation to the notion of conventional meaning” (1968: 225; 1989: 118). But one thing is clear from th outset: when used in its “favoured sense”, the verb ‘say’ takes as its subject an expression
used to pick out a *person*. *Mutatis mutandis* for ‘implicate’. Because he is so careful about this, Grice can get away with using the subjectless, passive expression ‘what is said’.

But there is plenty of less careful talk, much of it concerning “what is said” by a given *sentence* (perhaps relative to a context), or by a given *utterance*, *token*, or *use* of a sentence. It would be naïve to think a single, shared conception of saying underpins all philosophical talk of “what is said”. (Some is just too vague or muddled to bother with.) Kaplan (1978, 1989a) has provided a particularly clear notion of *what a sentence says relative to a context*, that has been rightly influential in the study of intensional logics for indexical languages, and perhaps there are notions of (e.g.) what an *utterance* says that will turn out to be useful. But Kaplan’s notion is importantly different from Grice’s, answering to different philosophical and logical needs, even if it part of its original or later motivation is connected to describing and explaining some of what may be loosely called “the same facts” and, in some some cases, what may be loosely called “the same contrasts”, many of which are, for better or worse—almost always *worst*—called contrasts between “semantic” and “pragmatic” facts. This is a topic I discuss at length elsewhere, in the course of airing the suspicion that the virtual anthropomorphizing of such things as sentences, sentence-tokens, utterances, inscriptions, or uses of sentences is unlikely to help explain anything that needs to be explained in order to answer the Master Question, and also in the course of investigating the unfortunate consequences of the hijacking of the word ‘semantics’ by logicians and the philosophers and linguists who have cowered before them. I can’t pursue the matter here, and for present purposes it suffices to say that no less than when we encounter uses of the passive, subjectless nominal ‘what is meant’ and demand an answer to the obvious question, “Meant by *what*?” whenever we encounter uses of ‘what is said’ (or, for that matter, uses of ‘what is implied’ and ‘what is communicated’), we should demand an answer to the question, “Said by *what*?” (“Implied by *what*?” “Communicated by *what*?”) A speaker? A sentence? A sentence token? An utterance of a sentence? A sentence-relative-to-a-context? In much work, the nominal ‘what is said’ has ceded to others: ‘the statement made’, ‘the proposition expressed’, ‘what is expressed’, or ‘what is semantically expressed’. But these are no less troublesome, inviting equally obvious by *what?* questions, which different theorists may answer in different ways, depending upon their philosophical or logical needs or outlooks. Similar questions may even be asked about uses of nominals that have been introduced to avoid various troubles, for example uses of ‘the explication’ and ‘the explicit content’ (introduced by Sperber and Wilson and used by relevance theorists), uses of ‘the semantic content’ (by people of all stripes), even uses of ‘the truth conditions’, may all invite certain “of *what*?” questions.

I plan to play safe. When talking about Grice, it will always be speakers that say or implicate. Grice is easy. Sperber and Wilson make life a bit harder because they took routinely about the explicit and implicit contents of *utterances*; but they are so obviously concerned with speaker meaning—or, rather, with the activity of identifying (or at least

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24 See *Linguistic Pragmatism*. 

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forming hypotheses about) speaker meaning, that it will do no harm—and it will make it easy to line up their work and Grice’s—if I talk on their behalf about the speaker’s explicit content and the speaker’s implicit content in uttering \( X \) (on a given occasion); or, much better, about the speaker’s explicit meaning and implicit meaning in uttering \( X \) (on that occasion), which, with Grice’s notions, I take to be notions means to capture what I shall call speaker’s \( d \) meaning (‘d’ for ‘direct’) and speaker’s \( i \) meaning (‘i’ for ‘indirect’).

9. CONDITIONS ON ACCOUNTS OF MEANING, SAYING AND IMPLYING

We have enough on the table now to specify some basic conditions that must be satisfied by talk of meaning, saying, and implicating if it is to be at all useful:

(A) Invoked notions of meaning, saying, and implicating must be presumed to play roles in explanations of significant empirical facts about language and its use.

(B) Invoked notions must be appropriately conceptually linked to one another and to certain other invoked notions in a conceptual nexus—saying must be appropriately linked to referring and predicating, for example.

(C) Whenever there is talk of what is meant, what is said, what is implied, what is communicated etc., the understood subjects of the verbs ‘mean’, ‘say’, ‘imply’, ‘communicate’ etc. must be clear so that potentially distinct concepts are not conflated.

(D) The concept of what is meant and what is communicated must not be conflated. A speaker may mean that \( p \) by uttering \( X \) yet fail to communicate that \( p \).

(E) We should take care distinguish theories of meaning, saying, implying etc. from theories of interpretation, construed as theories about the identification of what is meant, said, implied, etc. Theories of meaning, saying, implying etc. concern the facts that determine what utterers mean, say, imply etc. on given occasions—the facts in virtue of which utterers mean/say/imply whatever they mean/say/imply. As such they are proposed answers to constitutive question in metaphysics. Theories of interpretation concern the factors involved in audiences identifying what utterers mean, say, imply, etc. As such they are proposed answers to epistemic-evidential questions.

(F) In all talk of “determination”, the goals, perspectives, and epistemic situations of speakers, interpreters, and theorists must not be conflated.

(G) Whenever there is talk of the role intentions with which speakers produce their utterances, it must not be overlooked that, quite generally, the formation of a genuine intention is causally constrained by one’s expectations or beliefs about the possibility of fulfilling that intention; or that the formation of a genuine communicative intention (rather than a mere intention to communicate) by S is highly constrained by S’s expectations and beliefs about his audience’s capacity
to infer what S means on the basis of S’s uttering whatever it is S utters with that intention.

(H) Given that the goals of speakers and interpreters are typically reciprocal—viz. communicating and understanding, respectively—the ways in which constitutive, causal, and epistemic questions about “determining content” are distinguished must not close off the possibility of the answer to a question of one type constraining an answer to a question of one of the other types.

(I) Wherever there is talk of what “determines” the content of what is meant, said, implied, etc., constitutive, causal, and epistemic notions of determination must be clearly distinguished. In particular, the following must not be conflated:

(i) The facts that constitutively determine what a speaker is saying in uttering X on a given occasion (i.e. the facts in virtue of which a speaker is saying whatever it is he is saying by uttering X on that occasion);

(ii) The factors that bear on how an interpreter epistemically determines (i.e. identifies, ascertains, infers) what the speaker is saying by uttering X on a given occasion.

(iii) The facts that causally determine why it was X that the speaker uttered on a given occasion.

Much work in the philosophy of language—which I take to include empirical work on semantics undertaken by linguists and some work on the interpretation of statutes, contracts, and literary texts undertaken by legal and literary theorists—fails to satisfy many of these conditions. Consequently there is all too often merely the illusion of substantive debate between (seemingly) opposing camps. Where enough is on display to render particular claims substantive, it is frequently the case that opposing parties cannot be construed as invoking the same notions of meaning, saying, implying, referring, predicating, or communicating, rendering certain disputes merely verbal. And when debates concern the virtues and vices of competing notions of meaning, referring, etc., it is often the case that opposing parties are making very different assumptions about how those notions are (or should be) linked to other invoked notions, producing, once again, just the illusion of substantive debate.

PART II: SPEAKER’S DIRECT MEANING

10. SAYING

Given how frequently Grice’s work is discussed, how meticulous Grice was in introducing, deploying, and linking theoretical concepts, and how mindful of this his colleagues, students and friends have been in expounding, developing or rejecting various aspects of his work, it is surprising—alarming, even—that so many philosophers and linguists who invoke Grice
today are so careless in their attributions. Grice would turn in his grave if he knew people had claimed the following: (1) that he thought a speaker could say or conversationally implicate things he does not mean; (2) that he took sentences and utterances to conversationally implicate things; (3) that his theory of meaning and theory of conversational implicature cannot be reconciled because the former is cast completely in terms of the speaker’s mental states while the latter invokes the audience’s mental states and processes; (4) that he saw no role for his theory of conversation in an account of how interpreters can identify what speakers say; (5) that he conflated constitutive and epistemic notions of determination in characterizing what is meant, what is said, and what is conversationally implicated.

The meaning of a sentence $X$ bears some special relation to what $S$ says in uttering $X$ than it does to the content of what $S$ implicates. But the relation is more subtle than the one philosophers and linguists usually attribute to Grice. According to the commonly attributed view, Grice takes the content of what $S$ says in uttering $X$ to be constitutively determined by the conventional linguistic meaning of $X$ and by facts that resolve ambiguity and assign referents to various types of singular terms, including indexicals, demonstratives, and pronouns. This attribution appears to be based almost entirely on a single passage of the second of Grice’s William James lectures, a passage quoted and cited repeatedly, but rarely analysed carefully or considered in the context of the lectures as a whole. There are three problems with the position commonly attributed Grice. (a) It conflicts with Grice’s position that saying that $p$ involves meaning that $p$. (b) It conflates constitutive and epistemic determination. (c) When spelled out, it renders Grice’s position virtually unintelligible.25

First let’s get clear about the Gricean position on the relation the meaning of a sentence $X$ bears to what $S$ means by uttering $X$ on a given occasion. The official position is put well by Schiffer:

what a speaker means supervenes entirely on her communicative intentions, regardless of what the sentence she utters means (…while speaker-meaning isn’t a function of sentence-meaning, but only of communicative intentions, the rôle of sentence-meaning is to make known the speaker’s communicative intentions: the hearer is intended to rely on her knowledge of what the sentence means in order to infer what the speaker meant in uttering the sentence). (2006: 57)

We can think of $S$’s utterance of $X$ as “a linguistically coded piece of evidence” for what $S$ means by producing it.26 Important as it is, knowledge of the meaning of a sentence $X$ isn’t the only thing $A$ will or should rely on in forming a hypothesis about what $S$ means by uttering $X$. Knowledge of no fact about $X$ itself (semantic or otherwise) will reveal to $A$ that $S$ is speaking literally or speaking ironically; no knowledge of no fact about $X$ will reveal to $A$ what $S$ is conversationally implicating (if anything) or, in many cases, as Sperber and Wilson have argued at length, even the full story about what $S$ is saying. In principle, virtually anything could be a factor involved in $A$’s forming hypotheses about what $S$ means

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25 I discuss this in detail in “The Said and the Unsaid”, forthcoming in Analytic Philosophy.
26 I suppose that strictly speaking facts are evidence for other facts, so this needs to be reworked, but put that to one side.
(however constitutively determined) by uttering a sentence $X$ on a given occasion. But the dominant things are surely cognitive processes that involve $A$’s grasp of $X$’s meaning (if it has one) and inferences steered by $A$’s conceptions of all sorts of things I shall get to later.

We need now to address the constitutive questions about saying and implicating:

(CQs) In virtue of what facts is it the case that $S$ says whatever it is he says in uttering something, $X$, on a given occasion?

(CQi) In virtue of what facts is it the case that $S$ implicates whatever it is he conversationally implicates by saying whatever it is he says in uttering something, $X$, on a given occasion?

Grice is surely right that the notion of saying will play a role in providing a constitutive account of what a speaker conversationally implicates, so we must begin with saying. Recall that on Grice’s account, ‘say’ is a technical term—albeit one whose technical use has its origins in ordinary usage—and the “favored, and maybe in some degree artificial, sense” (1968: 225; 1989: 118) of ‘say’ he opts for is one he “expect[s] to be of greater theoretical utility than some other sense of ‘say’ would be” (1989: 121). At the same time, he was painfully aware that he needed “an explication of the favoured sense of ‘say’ and a clarification of its relation to the notion of conventional meaning” (1968: 225; 1989: 118). Evidently, he did not think it was obvious how sentence meaning and what is said are related and prior to making the the last quoted remark he had said only three things of note on the matter. First, in the oft-cited passage, he says that “In the sense in which I am using the word ‘say’, I intend what someone has said to be closely related to [my italics, SN] the conventional meaning of the words (the sentence) which he has uttered.” (1975: 44; 1989: 25). Grice was pathologically cautious in his wording, and it is striking that he says “closely related to” and not “largely determined by.” Many people write and talk as if it is just fine to interpret Grice’s words here as if they were “largely determined by.” (When I have asked people who appeal to this passage if they can quote it, almost always they say right, say “determined by” or “largely determined by” where Grice actually says “closely related to”.) But as noted earlier, one only has to look at what Grice (1969, 1981) has to say about incomplete definite descriptions used attributively to see that he was quite prepared to accept the need for a rich content account of what is said of the sort developed by Sperber and Wilson—he simply did not realise that such an account would have enabled him to provide a better account of what speakers are doing when they use (e.g.) ‘and’ than the implicature story he offers.

The two other places in which Grice talks interestingly about saying concern its relation to truth conditions, speaker’s meaning, conventional meaning and what he calls utterance-type occasion meaning. Three conditions he imposes on saying are vital to his project. I’ll call them the Truth Condition on Saying (TCS), the Meaning Condition on Saying (MCS), and the Systemic Condition on Saying (SCS).
The TCS effectively excludes from what is said anything that does not bear on the truth or falsity of a remark. In uttering the sentence ‘Ann is poor but she is honest’, S will not have said, on Grice’s account, anything about the relation between poverty and honesty (or about the relation between Ann’s poverty and Ann’s honesty). That is something S conventionally implicated, and the falsity of the implicature has no bearing on the truth of falsity of what S said, in Grice’s favored sense (which is simply that Ann is poor and Ann is honest). As I said earlier, I am putting conventional implicature to one side.

The MCS signals a clear departure from “an intuitive understanding” of ‘say’: “(in the favoured sense of ‘say’).… I want to say that (a) ‘S (utterer) said that p’ entails (b) ‘S did something x by which S meant [emphasis added] that p’.” (1989: 87). But there is another condition. The condition just mentioned is just half of a preliminary attempt to say what constitutively determines what S says in uttering X. The other half is a preliminary attempt to spell out the idea that what is said is to be “closely related to [my italics, SN] the conventional meaning of the words (the sentence) which he has uttered.” With “hideous oversimplification”, Grice suggests the following:

[In uttering X, S said that p iff] S did something x (1) by which S meant that p, (2) which is an occurrence of an utterance type φ (sentence) such that (3) φ means ‘p’, (4) φ consists of a sequence of elements (such as words) ordered in a way licensed by a system of rules (syntactical rules), (5) φ means ‘p’ in virtue of the particular meanings of the elements of φ, their order and their syntactical character (1989: 87).

In short, it appears to be Grice’s position that S’s saying that p in uttering X requires (i) S’s meaning that p by uttering X, and (ii) X’s being a sentence that, by virtue of the meanings of its parts and their grammatical configuration in X, is (in a way that needs to be carefully cashed out) an especially and predictably efficacious one for S to utter when wishing to mean that p. (i) is the MCS. I’ll call (ii) the Systemic Condition on Saying (SCS). And the fact that Grice imposes the SCS might be thought obviously to demonstrate that he cannot be interpreted as maintaining that what S says by uttering X is constitutively determined by, and only by, the meaning intentions S had in uttering X. For surely he is suggesting that what S says by uttering X is constitutively determined by two things, S’s meaning intentions and X’s meaning. There is no one thing that wholly determines what S says, but two things that each partly determine it. I think this is right and that it exposes a problem for the way I originally put my points about the constitution of saying in my 1992, 2004, and 2005 papers, a problem that is, I think avoided by the way I put them in the introduction here, by way of T1 and T2, repeated here with ‘say’ and ‘implicate’ in place of (the soon to be introduced) ‘mean’ and ‘i mean’.

27 Notice that Grice does not say that S means something by uttering x, he says that S means something by x. The difference is important, for he is talking about what he calls “utterance-type occasion meaning”, which is his label for what S means by x, “utterer’s occasion meaning” being the label for S means by uttering x. For discussion, see “The Said and the Unsaid”.

28 For various complications, not last of which are those posed by sentences containing indexicals, see Schiffer (1972).
T1 Audience-directed intentions $S$ had in uttering a sentence $X$ (on a given occasion) are the sole “suppliers” of any propositional content there is to what $S$ says and what $S$ implicates by uttering $X$ (on that occasion).

T2 Thinking that the linguistic meaning of $X$, the context in which $X$ is uttered, or indeed, anything other than audience-directed intentions $S$ had in uttering $X$ (on a given occasion) being “suppliers” of any content there is to what $S$ says by uttering $X$ (on that occasion) is a mistake typically engendered by (a) conflating constitutive and epistemic notions of the “determination” of the content of what $S$ says, (b) conflating facts that constitutively determine the content of a communicative intention with facts that formatically determine it, by which I mean facts that causally constrain the formation of a communicative intention with that content, (c) misunderstanding how sentence meaning, speaker, saying, implicating, and various other notions fit together in a nexus of theoretical concepts, or (d) a misunderstanding of what semantic and pragmatic theories can plausibly hope to explain.

The idea, then, is that the meaning of $X$ does not supply any of content of what is said, it constrains the supply, i.e constrains the content meaning intentions supply, requiring content to satisfy the constraint we call its meaning, $XM$. As far as formatics is concerned, role of $XM$ has already been characterized: $S$’s understanding of $X$ (or, perhaps, his beliefs about $A$’s understanding of $X$) played a causal rôle in the formation of the relevant meaning intention $S$ had in uttering $X$.

11. FROM SAYING TO IMPLYING

Grice proposes to explain one type of divergence between what $S$ says and what $S$ means by appealing to the nature and purpose of rational interaction, conversation being a characteristically purposeful, value-oriented, and cooperative enterprise governed by principles that it is in our interests to observe. And it is by reference to such principles that Grice characterizes (conversational) implicature. The characterizations he provides assume

(a) a notion of saying “which needs to be further elucidated” (1989: 86-87),
(b) “a rough general principle which participants will be expected (ceteris paribus) to observe” (1975: 45; 1989: 26), namely his Cooperative Principle (“Make your conversational contribution such as is required at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you
Grice’s central idea here is that there is a systematic correspondence between what \(S\) (conversationally) implicates and certain (non-trivial) assumptions \(S\) thinks \(A\) will need to make in order to preserve the supposition that \(S\) is being communicatively rational, i.e. observing the Cooperative Principle and maxims. Undoubtedly, this is Grice’s most important idea about the nature of conversational implicature. But the theory of conversation (of which the theory of conversational implicature is just a part) also plays a rôle in Grice’s theory of meaning. Contrary to claims that have been made lately, Grice did not present two quite independent theories, one (his theory of speaker meaning) concerning only speakers (their communicative intentions and what they mean on given occasions), the other (his theory of conversational implicature) concerning both speakers and addressees (the sorts of inferences addressees must be capable of making in order to identify (or at least form hypotheses about) what utterers conversationally implicate). The very nature of meaning intentions and the mutually dovetailed goals of speakers and addressees in acts of communication ensure that both parties are bound up in everything Grice has to say about what is meant, what is said, and what is conversationally implicated, even though these are all constitutively determined by the speaker’s communicative intentions. Stalnaker puts the point well:

I think it is important to see [Grice’s discussions of the analysis of meaning from his account of conversational implicature] as a part of a single project. As I understand the intended notion, conversational implicature is a kind of speaker meaning, a kind distinguished by the source of the expectations in terms of which speaker meaning is defined. The definition of conversational implicature should reflect this relation (Stalnaker, 1989: 526-27)

The relationship between the theory of meaning and the theory of conversation appears to be insufficiently appreciated in the literature.\(^{30}\) A careful reading shows Grice’s work to be...
considerably more holistic, cohesive and careful than it may initially seem, and there are three points I want to stress here:

1. The theory of *conversation* and theory of *implicature* can be properly understood only against the background of the theory of *meaning* because what \( S \) says and what \( S \) implicates are both parts of what \( S \) means.

2. Aspects of the theory of *conversation* shed light—and, in the context of the William James lectures, were *intended* to shed light—on the matter of *intention-recognition*, which is central to the theory of *meaning*.

3. Contrary the claims of contextualists and relevance theorists—claims based almost entirely on a wooden interpretation of a single passage of Grice that is cited over and again but rarely analysed—Grice countenances what Schiffer (1978) calls *implicit reference* and what Crimmins and Perry call *unarticulated constituents* because he recognises that the content of what \( S \) says by uttering \( X \) may include more than is supplied by the meaning of \( X \), the “assignment” of referents to referential noun phrases and tense markers in \( X \), and the “disambiguation” of lexical, syntactic, and anaphoric ambiguities, that Grice agrees with Sperber and Wilson that even abstracting from issues raised by lexical, structural, anaphoric, and phonological ambiguity, and issues raised by proper names, pronouns, indexicals and demonstratives, an interpreter’s understanding of the linguistic meaning of a sentence \( X \) “underdetermines” any conclusion the interpreter reaches—or any hypothesis the interpreter forms—about what \( S \) says in uttering \( X \) on a given occasion.

The two sides of communication—the sending and receiving, or the producing and consuming—are inextricably bound up with one another because human communication involves *intentional* agents with *reciprocal* goals, and this means that while constitutive and evidential questions must be separated, answers to certain constitutive and epistemic questions may constrain one another in ways it is vital to understand. Speakers want (and often expect) to be understood, and addressees seek (and often expect) to understand. To this extent, they are involved in a *cooperative* venture and a *coordination* exercise. *Ceteris paribus*, both parties mutually assume (if only tacitly), the following:

(i) That they are using individual words in more or less the same ways (with more or less shared meanings).

(ii) That they are combining words in accordance with more or less the same syntactic and semantic principles.

(iii) That utterers are assumed to be observing principles that make for utterances that are instances of rational, cooperative behaviour.

(iv) That they share enough beliefs and expectations to make this all worthwhile.
Of course, there may be situations where one of more of these assumptions must be relaxed considerably, but this does not alter the logical baseline. Stalnaker has it exactly right, I believe, when he says,

If the kind of intention that Grice uses to analyze speaker meaning is really essential to genuine communication, then it will be essential to the possibility of communication that there be a certain pattern of common interest between the participating parties. It will follow from the analysis of meaning that something like Grice’s cooperative principle, a principle that plays a central role in his theory of conversational implicature, is essential to the very idea of communication. (Stalnaker, 2006: 000).

Some nonsense has been talked recently about how Grice’s theory of conversational implicature cannot be reconciled with his theory of meaning. The claim is made by Saul (2002a), for example, who says the problem is that the theory of meaning is stated in terms of the psychological states of utterers, that the Cooperative Principle and maxims are parts of a theory that states directives for utterers, but the characterization of conversational implicature is characterized partly in terms of what audiences are to do.

The objection is naïve. It confuses perspectives, it ignores the relations among constitutive, causal, and epistemic issues, and it betrays a wooden interpretation of Grice’s own exposition. For purely expository purposes, Grice does sometimes choose to reflect on the perspective of the addressee, as, in effect, the speaker himself does in his act of meaning. But the glue that holds everything together is the idea of a rational, cooperative utterer, estimating a rational addressee’s ability—given the situation in which the utterer thinks they find themselves and certain antecedent assumptions about cooperative behaviour the utterer assumes they share in virtue of simple being rational—to infer specific addressee-directed intentions the speaker has in making his utterance, at least partly on the basis of recognizing that the speaker made the utterance with those very intentions. The role of the theory of conversational implicature within Grice’s overall theory of meaning can

31 Chomsky (1976) has argued that the Gricean assumption that communication is the essential function of language is empirically unjustified, unsupported by the archaeological record, and conceptually self-defeating. Anyone taking a stand on the relations between language, speech, communication, cooperation, intention, and self-expression will eventually have to confront empirical issues in developmental psychology, cognitive archaeology, and paleoanthropology, for the controversies about the conceptual relations that philosophers have been striving to articulate have developmental and evolutionary counterparts. One of the great questions about the human past concerns the extent (if any) to which language evolved as a system of communication, and the extent (if any) to which it evolved as a recursive system that made possible complex thought and thereby such things as self-expression, forward planning, and more complex memorization, before it facilitated communication per se. (If some cognitive archaeologists and paleoanthropologists are right, the question intersects with others about the development of tools, artistic expression, and methods of self-adornment.) Chomsky’s position is that appealing to natural selection (in particular to adaptation and the selectional pressure of social exchange) is pointless when it comes to the emergence of language (and many other traits). Language appeared by saltation, he suggests, rather that through a series of evolutionary steps: it appeared in one fell swoop, the product of a single mutation that made complex thought possible and so conferred numerous advantages on the mutant’s descendants, one of these being human communication, effected by speech, which is simply an externalization of language through sensory-motor systems. In short, on Chomsky’s account, language is something internal whose origins do not lie in any external pressures, let alone a pressure to communicate more effectively. It is easy to exaggerate the differences between Chomsky and Grice here; when the issues and positions are spelled out with the requisite care, their positions might turn out to be conceptually independent of one another and, speaking empirically, plausibly two sides of a single coin.
be stated precisely, and stating it brings out just how subtle the separation and interplay of constitutive, causal and epistemic considerations are in Grice’s thinking.32

(1) \( S \) has as a goal, in uttering \( X \), communicating something to \( A \) (and no doubt other goals as well);

(2) \( S \) presumes that \( A \) has as a goal, identifying what \( S \) is trying to communicate (i.e. identifying what \( S \) means by uttering \( X \));

(3) \( S \) appreciates (and presumes \( A \) appreciates) that \( S \)’s failing to observe the conversational maxims, or at least the Cooperative Principle, in producing his utterance will (ceteris paribus) thwart the satisfaction of the aforementioned goals;

(4) \( S \) will in general (ceteris paribus) proceed in the manner that the Cooperative Principle and maxims prescribe;

(5) \( S \) will presume \( A \) presumes (4); as such,

(6) \( S \) may intend communicate to \( A \) that \( q \) by saying (or play-saying) that \( p \), expecting \( A \) to answer the following question:

\[
\text{What local, non-trivial supposition about } S \text{ do I need to make right now if I am to construe } S \text{’s just saying (or play-saying) that } p \text{ as communicatively rational, i.e. if I am to construe } S \text{ as observing the maxims, or at least the Cooperative Principle, if not at the level of what is said, at least at the level of what is implicated?}
\]

If \( S \) intends \( A \) to suppose that \( S \) must think that \( q \), then if \( S \) transparently intends \( A \) to recognize that \( A \) is expected to come to this conclusion by means of answering the aforementioned question, then \( S \) means that \( q \) (whether or not \( S \) also meant that \( p \)). In such a case, \( S \) conversationally implicates that \( q \).

(7) \( S \) presumes \( A \) could reason more or less as follows (even if \( S \) does not actually expect \( A \) to do so):

(a) \( S \) has just said (or play-said) that \( p \);

(b) There is no reason to suppose \( S \) is not observing the maxims, or at least the Cooperative Principle;

(c) \( S \) could not be doing this unless he thinks that \( q \);

(d) \( S \) knows (and knows that I know that he knows) that I need to make the supposition that he thinks that \( q \) if I am to preserve the presumption that he is observing the maxims, or at least the Cooperative Principle;

(e) \( S \) has done nothing to stop me making the supposition that he thinks that \( q \);

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S must intend me to think that q;
So S has implicated that q.

In order to respect the background picture of utterer’s meaning against which the theory of conversation is to be understood, I have worded this so that all talk of A, including all talk of A’s mental states, is seen relative to S’s mental states—S’s perspective, goals, beliefs, intentions, and expectations. But obviously S’s perception of A’s perspective is among the many things constraining the formation of S’s meaning intentions.

S’s presumptions about the inferences A must be capable of making in order to identify (or at least make plausible hypotheses about) what S is conversationally implicating (if anything) will be constrained by at least the following:

(a) S’s presumptions about A’s inferential abilities;
(b) S’s presumptions about the language S is using (and about A’s presumptions about that language);
(c) S’s presumptions about the sorts of evidence (whether contextual or more general) that A is likely to draw upon in interpreting S’s utterance, and quite likely all sorts of beliefs S has about A (which may include (e.g.) beliefs about some of A’s beliefs about S).

For certain expository purposes—not least of which is the simplicity afforded by eschewing the sort of nested statements about propositional attitude that mushroom in talk about S’s beliefs, intentions, and expectations about A)—Grice realises it is sometimes helpful to abstract quietly from the perspective of S and focus directly on the (strictly speaking, subordinate) perspective of A, which in any event S is not entirely blind to and which S assumes will play a central role in A’s interpretation of S’s utterance. Examples of this occur in Grice’s oft-quoted characterizations of conversational implicature and calculability in Lectures 2 and 5 of ‘Logic and Conversation’ (1975: 49-50; 1989: 30-31 & 86). The first of these is the following characterization of conversational implicature (for continuity with the present text, I have harmlessly replaced ‘a man’ by ‘someone’, ‘the speaker’ by ‘S’, ‘the hearer’ by ‘A’, and ‘he’ (some of the time) by ‘S’ or ‘A’ as appropriate):

[1] Someone, S, who, by (in, when) saying (or making as if to say) that p has implicated that q, may be said to have conversationally implicated that q, provided that (1) S is to be presumed to be observing the conversational maxims, or at least the Cooperative Principle; (2) the supposition that S is aware that, or thinks that, q is required in order to make S’s saying or making as if to say p (or doing so in those terms) consistent with this presumption; and (3) S thinks (and would expect A to think that S thinks) that it is within the competence of A to work out, or grasp intuitively, that the supposition mentioned in (2) is required. (1975: 49-50; 1989: 30-31).

In stating these three conditions, Grice is providing an informal and compressed characterization, and informed readers have had no trouble appreciating that when the time comes to slot a final theory of implicature into a final theory of utterer’s meaning, some
expansion and tidying will be needed. Notice that Grice does not say that $A$ (or anyone else) need actually presume $S$ is observing the CP and maxims: he says that $S$ “is to be presumed” to be observing them. And the obvious way of expanding and tidying is to ensure all mention of $A$ is embedded within talk about $S$:

[1*] Someone, $S$, who, by (in, when) saying (or making as if to say) that $p$ has implicated that $q$, has conversationally implicated that $q$, provided that (1’) $S$ does not think there is some reason $A$ should not presume $S$ to be observing the conversational maxims, or at least the Cooperative Principle; (2’) $S$ expects that $A$ will recognize that the supposition that $S$ is aware that, or thinks that, $q$ is required in order to make $S$’s saying or making as if to say $p$ (or doing so in those terms) consistent with the presumption that $S$ is observing the conversational maxims, or at least the Cooperative Principle; and (3’) $S$ thinks (and would expect $A$ to think that $S$ thinks) that it is within the competence of $A$ to work out, or grasp intuitively, that the supposition mentioned in (2’) is required.

To get the full Gricean flavour, I suppose we might consider replacing (3’) by the stronger (3’’): $S$ intends $A$ to work out, or grasp intuitively, that the supposition mentioned in (2’) is required.

At the end of Lecture 2, and at the beginning of Lectures 3 and 5, Grice provides compressed one-sentence summaries of the general idea (or at least of part of it):

[2] To calculate a conversational implicature is to calculate what has to be supposed in order to preserve the supposition that the Cooperative Principle is being observed (1975: 58; 1989: 40).

[3] The assumptions required in order to maintain the supposition that [the CP and some subordinate maxims] are being observed (or so far as is possible observed) either at the level of what is said—or failing that, at the level of what is implicated—are in systematic correspondence with non-conventional implicata of the conversational type (1978: 113-14; 1989: 41).

[4] What is implicated is what it is required that one assume $S$ to think in order to preserve the assumption that $S$ is following the Cooperative Principle (and perhaps some conversational maxims as well), if not at the level of what is said, at least at the level of what is implicated. (1969: XX; 1989: 86).

Again, there are obvious ways to expand and tidy, when the time comes, embedding within talk about $S$ or $A$:

[2*] To be engaged in calculating a conversational implicature is to be engaged in calculating what one has to suppose in order to preserve the supposition that the Cooperative Principle is being observed.

[3*] The assumptions one is required to make in order to maintain the supposition that [the CP and some subordinate maxims] are being observed (or so far as is possible observed) either at the level of what is said—or failing that, at the level of what is implicated—are in systematic correspondence with what one takes to be non-conventional implicata of the conversational type.

[4*] What $A$ takes $S$ to be implicating is what $A$ thinks $A$ is required to assume $S$ thinks in order to preserve the assumption that $S$ is following the Cooperative Principle (and perhaps some conversational maxims as well), if not at the level of what is said, at least at the level of what is implicated.

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On the face of it, Grace is specifying three requirements (necessary conditions) for conversational implicature. And it is enough, according to these requirements, that S intend A intuitively to grasp the supposition that is required. Grice’s fourth requirement, often called the calculability requirement, changes this and reinforces the distinction between conversational and conventional implicatures:

[5] The presence of a conversational implicature must be capable of being worked out; for even if it can in fact be intuitively grasped, unless the intuition is replaceable by an argument, the implicature (if present at all) will not count as a conversational implicature; it will be a conventional implicature (Grice, 1975: 50; 1989: 31).

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

Grice adds three more requirements. A conversational implicature is supposed to be cancelable (either explicitly or contextually, without contradiction) nondetachable, and non-trivial.

In each of the cases of purported conversational implicature that Grice considers, the calculability requirement appears to be met—i.e. it does seem to be possible to justify the existence of the implicature in question in the way Grice suggests. But several points need to be kept in mind. First, as Sperber and Wilson stress, in quotation [1] above, q is introduced without explanation in the reasoning, so Grice is not here stating any sort of method or procedure for calculating the content of a conversational implicature. Second, it does not follow that S has conversationally implicated that q, from the fact that A reasoned in precisely this manner to the conclusion that, by saying that p, S has conversationally implicated that q. If S did not mean that q, then S did not implicate that q. Third, since we are involved in a project which is, at bottom, empirical, we cannot simply assume the intuitive distinction between saying and conversationally implicating corresponds to anything of real theoretical significance. The lack of a generally accepted criterion for distinguishing what S says and what S conversationally implicates does not undermine the viability of the distinction itself: there are certainly many cases in which there is near universal agreement.34

12. DIRECT AND INDIRECT MEANING

While the need for a principled distinction along Gricean lines is now taken for granted, there is little consensus on where or how to draw it if it is to be empirically significant. The literature is full of interesting examples philosophers have used use to bolster or undermine positions on where, precisely, Grice draws the line, and where, precisely, we should draw the line. Many are happy to follow Grice (or their versions of Grice); others prefer to add

34 Arguably, the distinction is loosely reflected in the intuitive distinction between lying and misleading: S lied if, and only if, S said something S believed to be false? A misled if, and only if, S conversationally implicated something S believed to be false? But perhaps not. For discussion see Adler (1997).
judicious bends or kinks; still others prefer to draw the line anew, most notably Sperber and Wilson (1986), who distinguish what they call the *explicit* and *implicit* contents of an utterance. The distinction is proposed as the natural successor to the saying/implicating distinction and is motivated by the belief that it bifurcates content in a way that is much better suited to the demands of a pragmatic theory, construed as an empirical theory of utterance interpretation. As Sperber and Wilson see matters, Grice’s notion of what is said is overly *narrow* (by virtue of being too closely tied to sentence meaning), and his notion of what is conversationally implicated overly *broad*. One of their examples, discussed in more detail by Carston (2002), concerns the use of ‘and’. According to Grice,

a. The meaning of ‘and’ is identical to the (stipulated) meaning of (i.e., AND) in classical logic, and there is no need to posit a lexical ambiguity to explain data that suggests otherwise based on examples such as the following:

   (1) They had twins and they got married.

   (2) The President said, “Please sit,” and everyone sat.

b. Someone uttering a sentence ‘p and q’ is not saying anything with stronger truth conditions than those given by ‘p AND q’, where AND expresses logical conjunction.

c. If S is using p and q to describe events, typically S will conversationally implicate that the event being described with p preceded the event being described with q.

d. This can be explained by recourse by a theory of *conversation*, a theory of norms governing communicative behaviour, a preliminary account of which is rolled up into the Cooperative Principle and attendant maxims enjoining (roughly) truthfulness, informativeness, relevance, and clarity, the last of which enjoins S to (ceteris paribus) present material in an “orderly” fashion.

But Cohen (1971) presents a serious problem for this idea, discussed at length by Carston (2002).\(^{35}\) S can, without inconsistency, say ‘if p and q then r’, but it is not the case that if q and p then r’. But if ‘and’ is commutative, like , then ‘p and q’, then assuming seemingly uncontroversial principles of composition, *S should be saying the same thing whether he utters ‘if p and q then r’ or ‘if q and p then r’. The problem, as relevance theorists see it, is not the assumption that if it is part of what S means by uttering ‘p and q’ that the event described using p preceded the event described using q, then it is part of what S says or else or part of what S implicates. The problem, rather, is the assumption that (a) entails (b). Grice is led to make this assumption, the relevance theorists claim, because he overlooks the fact that the background presumption, shared by S and A, that S is observing the Cooperative Principle and conversational maxims, underpins not only the possibility of meaning something by uttering X without actually saying it, but also the possibility of saying something that is not fully determined by the meaning of X.\(^{36}\) The content of what S says by uttering ‘p and q’ can go beyond what is given by the composition of the meanings of p,

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\(^{36}\) For Sperber and Wilson, any work done by the CP and maxims is done by their Principle of Relevance, but this fact is not germane to the aspects of the example I am stressing.
‘and’, and q, the presence of additional content explained by reference to the theory of conversation. As it sometimes put—very misleadingly, as we shall see—part of the content of what S says is determined pragmatically.

Although relevance theorists are right about where they diverge with Grice in this particular case, they are, I think, wrong (as are their critics) about just how much they are departing from Grice overall. As I have argued elsewhere, there is plenty of evidence that Grice appreciates his theory of conversation has implications for what is said, not just for what is conversationally implicated, and no real evidence that he saw his conception of what is said as so narrowly tied to linguistic meaning that it cannot accommodate the sort of “underdetermination” exemplified by uses of many of the sentences relevance theorists discuss. (See section 13.)

A proper comparison of where the different parties draw their lines is impossible with knowing what the lines are being drawn through. Contrary to some vocal opinion, Sperber and Wilson are on the same page as Grice here (unlike some of those who claim to have improved Grice’s line): the distinguished terms are meant to be carving out theoretically significant parts of speaker meaning, i.e. parts of what S means by uttering something, X. So let us view the parties as offering competing accounts of how to separate two propositional contents we will need to separate in any empirically satisfactory account of how XM and SM are related:

(SdM) What S directly means, e.g. says) in uttering X on a given occasion

(S,M) What S means (indirectly means, e.g. implicates) by d meaning (or making as if to d mean) whatever it is S means (or makes as if to d mean) in uttering X on a given occasion.

If it is understood that Tom will be driving Sam home from a party and shortly after midnight Sam says to Tom, ‘I have to be up at 6.00 a.m.’, what Sam means (her direct meaning) is that she has be up at 6.00 a.m. and means (her indirect meaning) is that it is time to leave (for example).

13. PRAGMATISM

Pragmatists have argued that there are all sorts of sentences whose meanings cannot be sensibly identified with what speakers mean when they utter them, even abstracting from the issues raised by indexicals and demonstratives. As it is sometimes put, there is a “gap” between XM and SdM that needs to be bridged, XM “underdetermines” SdM, providing at most a “schema”, “skeleton”, “template”, or “blueprint” for the propositional content of

37 Some of those who are not on the same page—including some who mistakenly think they are—are carving out parts of what an utterance or token or use of X means, for example, or parts of what X means relative to the context of S’s utterance, and this really does make a difference. Grice (1969) is at pains to distinguish speaker’s meaning (or utterer’s occasion-meaning as he calls it) from notions of utterance meaning (utterance-type occasion meaning) and contextualized sentence meaning (applied timeless meaning of an utterance type).
The following examples have been discussed widely (there will be more in the next section):

1. Tom’s horse (book/joke/suggestion) won
2. The monarch (president/governor…) may dissolve parliament
3. It’s foggy (raining/dark/midnight/Sunday/winter…).

The pragmatist’s intentional-inferential claims—one constitutive, the other epistemic—can be made without going through each example. The first, constitutive, point is that whenever S uses any of (1)-(3) to mean something, content of S_dM is determined, at least in part, by S’s meaning intentions in uttering X. In uttering (1), S might mean that the horse Tom owns won the Derby, that the horse Tom was riding won the Cheltenham Gold Cup, that the horse Tom trained won the St Leger, that the horse Tom wagered on in the Thousand Guineas won the Thousand Guineas, or any of a host of other things with quite different truth conditions. Whatever the meaning of ‘won’ is, it does not specify some specific thing that has been won. And whatever the meaning of the possessive marker is, it does not specify some specific “possession” relation; its meaning is tied to its purpose in speech, which is to indicate that S has some specific relation in mind, one the speaker typically thinks it is within the capacity of A to work out and manifestly intends A to work out. (This does not mean someone using (1) means that there is some entity E and some relation R such that the horse bearing R to Tom won E, though this is entailed by whatever the speaker does mean.) And that bring us to the second, epistemic point: in order for A to determine in the epistemic sense, i.e. in order for A to identify (or at least form a hypothesis about) S_dM, A must engage in pragmatic, non-demonstrative inference. But this does not mean that pragmatic inference determines any part of the content of S_dM, i.e. it does not mean that pragmatic inference is a constitutive determinant of any part of S_dM.

Similarly, in uttering (2), S might mean that the Danish monarch may dissolve Denmark’s parliament, that the Danish monarch may dissolve Iceland’s parliament, or any of a host of other things with quite different truth conditions. (This does not mean someone using (2) means that there are entities E and F such that the monarch of E may dissolve F’s parliament, though this is entailed by whatever the speaker does mean.) In uttering (3) S might mean that it’s foggy in Copenhagen, that it’s foggy in Oslo, or any of a host of other things with quite different truth conditions. (This does not mean someone using (3) means that there is an entity E such that it’s foggy in/at E, though this is entailed by whatever the speaker does mean.) The principal intentional-inferential points are as before. First, the content of S_dM is constitutively determined, at least in part, by S’s meaning intentions in uttering X. Second, in order for A to determine in the epistemic sense, i.e. in order for A to identify (or at least form a hypothesis about) S_dM, A must engage in pragmatic, non-demonstrative inference. But this does not mean that pragmatic inference determines any

38 References: Bach, Carston, Neale, Recanati, Schiffer, Sperber and Wilson.
part of the content of $S_d M$, i.e. it does not mean that pragmatic inference is a constitutive determinant of any part of $S_d M$. And so on for the other examples and countless others.

14. FORMALISM

In the final Part of this essay, I shall examine various arguments against intentional-inferential pragmatism and explain where they go wrong. But before that I want to say a few things about a rather different type of theory, formalism, which has its origins in the study of formal languages, and about hybrid theories that appear to be the products of attempts to have one’s cake and eat it.

Down on the ground, as it were, a direct comparison of pragmatism and formalism runs the risk of conflating two notions of what is said that I separated earlier, the broadly Gricean speaker-based notion that has dominated my discussion and and the Kaplanian sentence-based notion. Call them, respectively, what is said$_p$ and what is said$_f$. Many formalists But at a higher level, a direct comparison is possible because pragmatism and formalism are really ways of staking out the theoretical primacy of, on the one hand, speaker meaning and minds (pragmatism), and on the other, sentence meaning and languages (formalism), when it comes to addressing our master question. That said, some people who should be classed as formalists, in the sense I intend, do not always talk about what is said by a sentence relative to a context, they talk, some of the time anyway, about what is said by an utterance of a sentence. Bringing in truth conditions here will make the discussion simpler: some people who should be classed as formalists, in the sense I intend, are either happy to identify the truth conditions of what is said$_p$ and the truth conditions of what is said$_f$, or else happy to talk liberally about “the truth conditions of what is said by an utterance”, “the truth conditions of an utterance” or even “the truth conditions of an assertion”. So we need to distinguish the official (I suppose) sentence-formalism, which can be found in the work of Nathan Salmon and others, from the sort of utterance-formalism which can be found in the work of (e.g.) Jason Stanley.

The sentence-formalist is interested in sentence contents (relative to contexts) and the utterance-formalist utterance contents. It seems to be the perception of a good number of people (formalists and pragmatists alike) that the contents pragmatists must be interested in are precisely the contents utterance-formalists are interested in, viz. utterance contents, speech act contents, or sentence-token contents. After all (the train of thought seems to go) what else could be the bearer of content if not sentences? Not speakers. (Bearing content is not like bearing myrrh.) But the pragmatist answer finesses talk of utterance contents and speech act contents: thought contents. The pragmatist is interested in the contents of the thoughts utterers intend to induce in their addressees. (What $S$ says by uttering $X$ is part of what $S$ means by uttering $X$.) So in any particular case, the content the pragmatist is interested in is the content of a particular thought $S$ intends to induce in $A$ by way of uttering something. There is simply no need to start out with talk of speech act contents, utterance contents, or sentence-token contents.
The formalist conception of what is said and its relation to sentence meaning is driven by the following ideas:

a. An account of *sentence* meaning can be provided without drawing upon a prior account of *speaker* meaning, as the meaning of a sentence is a function of just *word meaning* and recursively structured principles of *meaning composition*.

b. These recursively structured principles of meaning composition can be investigated without worrying about the philosophical question (sometimes called the “foundational” question) of what meaning *is*.

c. Divergences between sentence meaning and “what is said” are *systematic*, attributable solely to the fact that sentences contain elements that exploit facts about “context” such as tense markers and the indexical and demonstrative words ‘here’, and ‘now’, ‘I’, ‘you’, ‘he’, ‘she’, ‘it’, ‘this’, and ‘that’ (and forms inflected for a different case or number).

d. The study of such divergences is part of *semantics* because it concerns the ways in which the *meanings* of such expressions *systematically* exploit context. (For example, the meaning of ‘I’ determines that it refers to the speaker; and the meaning of ‘here’ determines that it refers to the speaker’s spatial location at the time of speaking.)

On such an account, what is said by a sentence $X$ relative to a context (for the *sentence-*formalist) or by an utterance of a sentence (for a *speech-act* formalist) is constitutively determined by the meaning of $X$ and those features of context exploited by the meaning of any indexical or demonstratives in $X$.

In effect, the formalist is claiming that there is a key theoretical notion of what is said, that can be investigated without giving any thought to a notion *speaker meaning*. All that is needed to provide an account of what is said is (1) a compositional account of *sentence meaning*, (2) an account of *lexical meaning* that (a) feeds the composition rules and (b) specifies, in connection with individual words, the contributions to what is said made by *context*, and (3) a general account of *context*. So the question that has to be asked is whether such a notion of what is said—or *semantic content* as formalists often call it (aptly in the case of sentence-formalists, but less so perhaps in the case of speech-act formalists)—will find its place in a theory that answers our master question.

The pragmatist claims that the content of what is said$_p$ (e.g. S$_0$M or Sperber and Wilson’s explicit content) is often richer than is the content of any formalist conception of what is said. Cases involving utterances of sentences of the following are meant to provide evidence for this (the first three were discussed in the previous section);

1. Tom’s horse (book/joke/suggestion) lost
2. The monarch (president/governor…) may dissolve parliament
3. It’s foggy (raining/dark/midnight/Sunday/winter….).
(4) Ann has had breakfast (a flu shot/pneumonia/six husbands…)
(5) Everyone is ready (satisfied/delighted/honoured/agreed…)
(6) No-one has started (finished/eaten/replied/complained/agreed…) yet
(7) This is too hot (wide/heavy/dark/difficult…)

An answer to our master question will have to explain why the truth conditions of something or other we find very important when considering utterances of (1)-(7), are the truth conditions of the rich content of the pragmatist’s what is said\(_p\). So if formalism is to figure in an answer to the master question, either (a) what is said\(_f\) will itself have to have the same rich content, or (b) formalism will need to be supplemented by an account of the relations between what is said\(_f\) and what is said\(_p\). Which brings me to a fundamental point that some formalists involved in debates about what is said simply have not grasped:

> Pragmatists are denying there is a role in a theory of anything forming part of an answer to the master question for a notion of “semantic content”, i.e. what is said\(_f\) that has a content distinct from the content of what is said\(_p\).

If the formalist (a) accepts what is said\(_f\) will itself have to have the same truth conditions as the truth conditions of pragmatist’s rich content notion of what is said\(_p\), there is only one course of action available that does not involve giving up the game, and it is heroic: find more indexicals in the sentence, pronoun-like expressions that lack phonological properties, which I have called aphonic\(_s\). This is something that Stanley appreciates: “All effects of extra-linguistic context on the truth-conditions of an assertion are traceable to elements in the actual syntactic structure of the sentence uttered” (Stanley 2000: 391). “The standard [counterexamples] are not persuasive [in each case] there is an unpronounced pronominal element in the logical form of the sentence uttered [that contributes content] (2000: 410).

In defending these claims, Stanley assumes a particular notion of logical form, imported from a favored type of syntactic theory. By the “logical form” of a sentence, he has in mind a phrase marker in the sense of generative grammar, “a special sort of linguistic representation” (2000, 391), its “actual syntactic structure” (2000, 391), its “real structure” (2000, 392), which is “revealed by empirical inquiry” (2000, 392) and which “is, in fact, quite distinct from its surface grammatical form” (2000, 392).39

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39 Stanley refrains from explicitly identifying a sentence's logical form with its LF yet says he is using ‘logical form’ in accordance with “standard” usage in syntactic theory: “syntax associates with each occurrence of a natural language expression a lexically and perhaps also structurally disambiguated structure which differs from its apparent structure, and is the primary object of semantic interpretation. In accord with standard usage in syntax, I call such structures logical forms.” (2000, 393). Within a Chomskyan framework, some versions of theories that posit Logical Form, or LF, as a bona fide level of syntactic representation (my own included) are effectively positing logical forms in the sense Stanley is talking about. Certainly there are substantive internecine debates amongst such LF theorists, but there is something approximating a “standard” use of ‘logical form’, or at least ‘Logical Form’ among these LF theorists, even if important details are fiercely debated and different stances are taken on the nature and shape of an overall theory of meaning. My position on the precise nature of these logical forms, LFs, has evolved. In Neale (1990) I assumed it was harmless to treat them as rich enough to have truth conditions and I attempted to spell out that idea in Neale (1993). But in Neale (2004, 2005) my position is that they do not carry enough information to have truth conditions, they are merely the grammar’s contribution to representations that do.

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I do not want to pronounce on the viability of this idea here, which seems to me well worth exploring in more detail than it has been to date. I am using it first to show that there is at least one formalist who sees clearly what is needed to defend a formalist account of what is said if it to capture the the pragmatist’s rich content truth conditions in connection with utterances of (1)-(7) and countless other sentences and, second, to clarify a debate between pragmatists and formalists about the determination of what is said, which can easily end in confusion.

The formalist implementation Stanely favours yields the following picture:

(a) The proposition expressed by a sentence $X$ relative to a context $C$ is a proposition determined by, and only by, two things: (i) the denotations relative to $C$ of the elements of $X$’s LF and (ii) a set of context-invariant compositional operations on these denotations, determined by, and only by, the structure of $X$’s LF.

(b) The effects of extralinguistic factors on the proposition expressed by $X$ relative to $C$ are restricted to the provision of denotations to some fixed set of expressions that are “context-sensitive” (“indexical,” in a broad sense of the word), “primitive expression[s] whose denotation[s] [are] supplied entirely by context, perhaps guided by a linguistic rule” (2000, 400).

(c) Among these expressions are “indexicals,” in a narrow sense of the word, expressions possessing “the characteristics shared by such words as ‘I’, ‘here’, and ‘now’, but not by ‘this’, ‘that’, ‘she’, and ‘he’, such as resistance to bindability by variable-binding operators” (2000, 400).

(d) There are three types of overt expressions whose denotations are context-sensitive (indexical, in the broad sense):

First, there are expressions which are obviously indexicals in the narrow sense of the term, words such as ‘I’, ‘here’, ‘you’, ‘now’, and their brethren. Secondly, there are expressions which are obvi- ously demonstratives, such as ‘this’ and ‘that’. Third, there are expressions that are obviously pronouns, such as ‘he’ and ‘she’. Overt expressions that are in none of these classes are not context-dependent. (2000: 400).

(e) Any other type of context-sensitivity is attributable to the presence of aphonics in syntax:

If the truth-conditions of constructions containing [overt expressions that are in none of three classes mentioned in (d)] are affected by extra-linguistic context, this context dependence must be traced to the presence of an obvious indexical, demonstrative, or pronominal expression at logical form, or to a structural position in logical form that is occupied by a covert variable. (2000: 400)

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40 I have discussed Stanely’s position in details elsewhere. See Neale (2007). My complaints in that work are not with the overall idea itself (which, as I say, is worth exploring in details) but with (a) Stanley’s claim that the “existence” of the aphonics “pronominals” he posits “can be demonstrated by purely syntactic tests” (2002, 150), when in point of fact, all of the tests he marshals crucially appeal to semantic facts and demonstrate nothing about syntax, (b) the lack of syntactic details for what is really a syntactic proposal for explaining semantic facts, and (c) the way Stanley wields his favoured syntactic framework (without any syntactic details) against the pragmatic position in general and against Perry’s position in particular, which he misrepresents in crucial ways.

41 In other work, Stanley adds a fourth category, “context-dependent quantifiers such as ‘many’ and (perhaps) ‘that’” (2002a: 150).
We are now in a position to summarise precisely what has gone wrong in some debates between pragmatists and formalists about the content of what is said.

15. FORMALISM VS PRAGMATISM?

Formalists and pragmatists are often seen arguing about whether it is contributions made by context or by pragmatic inference that “bridges the gap” or “makes up the shortfall” between sentence meaning and what is said. But that is a deeply confused what of contrasting the positions. To contrast them properly, we need to distinguish CQs and PQs:

CQs  In virtue of what facts is it the case that S says whatever it is he says in uttering something, X, on a given occasion?

PQs  What sources of information and what types of cognitive operations drive the (typically spontaneous) formation of A’s interpretive hypotheses about what S says in uttering X on a given occasion?

The formalist should be viewed as putting forward an answer to the constitutive question CQs: facts about XM and context. (I’ll come to recent formalist appeals to intentions in a moment). The pragmatist is putting forward answers to both questions (and the answer to PQs might well be adopted by the formalist.) The pragmatist answer to CQs: (1) the meaning intentions with which S uttered X (qua sole content supplier) and (2) XM (qua sole content filter). A rough pragmatist answer to PQs (which I spell out more carefully in Part III, coming right up) is this: knowledge of XM, context, pragmatic inference, beliefs about A, maxims of conversation, relevance, salience, discourse structure, common ground, norms, community standards, social practices, expert opinions,….but not speaker’s intentions.

PART III : DETERMINATIONS

16. THE “DETERMINATION” OF SPEAKER’S MEANING

I suggested that (1) could serve as a preliminary statement of a Gricean answer to CQ, and (2) as preliminary statement of the sort of answer some pragmatists prefer:

(1)  S means that p by uttering X iff for some audience, A, S uttered X intending A to think that p (or to think that A thinks that p) at least partly on the basis of recognising that S intended A to recognise this intention.

(2)  S means that p by uttering X iff for some audience, S uttered X intending (i) A to think (or think that S thinks) that p, and (ii) A to think that S uttered X intending (i).42

42 Neale (1992), Sperber and Wilson (1995, 2002),
And I pointed out that in offering such an answer to CQ, the pragmatist makes no mention of A’s actual ability to interpret X and no mention of such things as the context of utterance, the topic of conversation, background information, discourse structure, salience, relevance, conversational maxims, pragmatic inference, social conventions, norms, or practices, community standards, expert opinions, causal chains, or even linguistic meaning. What S meant, on such accounts, is wholly constitutively determined by S’s meaning intentions in uttering X, and to complain that facts about A or about the context of utterance, the topic of conversation, background information, discourse structure, salience, relevance, conversational maxims, pragmatic inference, etc. are smuggled into (1) involves conflating CQ with PQ, or with FQ’s reciprocal question on the speaker’s side, which I shall come to shortly.

An answer to PQ will make reference to (i) A’s grasp of the linguistic meaning of X (as constitutively determined by the conventions of the language to which X belongs), (ii) the informational contents of certain of A’s perceptual and doxastic states, and (iii) cognitive principles and operations governing the identification, evaluation and integration of information arriving from various channels and sources, including especially information about the assumed linguistic meaning of X. That is, the answer to PQ will specify the fully general component of an explanation of how audiences form the hypotheses they do about what speakers mean by uttering whatever they utter on given occasions. An answer to PQ, then, is a theory of utterance interpretation, i.e. a pragmatic theory in the sense of Sperber and Wilson (1995, 2002).

There is no obvious delimitation of the cognitive states whose informational contents are alluded to in (ii) above. In principle, in any particular case, all sorts of information might be exploited by A in the process of forming a hypothesis about what S means, including (but certainly not restricted to) information flowing from what I shall call A’s takes on (i.e. beliefs and expectations about, or perceptions, conceptions or estimations of) items such as those on the following list: S’s fluency in the language to which X belongs; the extent to which S is a stickler for accurate or careful wording; the topic of conversation and the nature of the discourse; the relative salience for S of certain objects in the immediate environment; the relevance to S of certain types of information; prior conversations with S or people who know S; the extent to which A and S share specialized knowledge of what is being discussed; S’s general knowledge; S’s general intelligence; the extent to which S can be presumed to be a rational, cooperative speaker; the extent to which S can be assumed to be operating in accordance with various norms, conventions, practices, maxims, canons, and community standards; the extent to which S’s choice of language (in general, or given the topic at hand) may be affected by emotional considerations. Call this list—which is not even

43 If Chomsky (2000) and Fodor (1983, 1987, 2001) are right, then asking for a theory of interpretation is tantamount to asking for a complete ‘theory of mind’ because the hypotheses audiences form about what speakers mean are the outputs of a central all-purpose inference system that can access all manner of information from all manner of sources, making them etiologically very unlike the outputs of cognitive modules (in Fodor’s sense) such as the perceptual channels. But if Sperber and Wilson are right, they are the products of a dedicated inference system that forms “a sub-module of the mind-reading module, with its own special-purpose principles and mechanisms” Wilson (2005: 1129).
close to exhaustive, of course—Z. In principle, A’s take on anything on Z could play a rôle
in the formation of the particular hypothesis A forms about what S means on a given
occasion by uttering X.

Despite their very different natures, CQ and PQ get run together in the literature,
sometimes with disastrous consequences. One source of the conflation is carelessness with
the verb ‘determine’, which may be used to talk about quite different constitutive, epistemic,
causal and stipulative notions. Consider the following statement of a seemingly interesting
question:

*Q  How is what S means by uttering X on a given occasion determined?

Someone using this form of words might be asking either of two very different questions,
more clearly articulated as CQ’ or PQ’:

CQ’  What constitutively determines what S means by uttering X on a given
occasion?

PQ’  What is involved in an audience’s epistemically determining what S means by
uttering X on a given occasion?

But CQ’ and PQ’ are just ways of asking CQ and PQ, respectively. Hence the ambiguity in
*Q, which will rear its head later.

The separated notions of determination are connected thus:

C/P  If the linguistic meaning of X does not wholly determine (constitutively) what S
said by uttering X on a given occasion, then A will need to draw on more than
knowledge of the linguistic meaning of X in order to determine (epistemically)
what S said by uttering X on that occasion.

But the existence of this important connection between the two notions of determination is
no excuse for running them together. Sperber and Wilson talk repeatedly about “pragmatic
contributions” (2012: 8) to what is said (or to explicit content), indeed about “the
contribution of pragmatic inference” (2012: 9) to what is said, saying that on their account
“pragmatic inference makes a substantial contribution” (2012: 9) to it. What they must
really be claiming here can be captured by saying that “pragmatic inference makes a
substantial contribution to the process of identifying (epistemically determining)” what is
said, or that “pragmatic inference plays a substantial rôle in identifying (epistemically
determining)”. Unfortunately, they have been interpreted as claiming that “pragmatic
inference plays a substantial rôle in constitutively determining” what is said. And to make
matters worse, To make matters worse, Sperber and Wilson’s responses to attacks premised
on interpreting them as making a constitutive claim have not only failed to spot the
conflation, they have tended to reinforce it.
17. THE FORMATIC DETERMINATION OF MEANING INTENTIONS

PQ has a complementary question on the speaker’s side of the equation. For the sake of argument, suppose the Gricean answer to CQ is correct: \( S \) means whatever he means by uttering \( X \) on a given occasion in virtue of the meaning intentions \( S \) has in uttering \( X \). Before even getting to meaning intentions, it should be noted that even ordinary intentions are not a dime a dozen:

The formation of genuine intentions is severely constrained by beliefs. I cannot intend to become a prime number, intend to digest my food through my lungs on alternate Tuesdays, or swim from New York to Sydney because (roughly) I cannot intend what I believe to be impossible (Neale 2005: 181; 2004: 77).

If meaning intentions are audience-directed, as the Gricean maintains, this modal constraint has real bite when it comes to the formation of genuine meaning intentions. For \( S \) to have formed a meaning intention, \( S \) must have paired a proposition with the content that \( p \) and an utterance-type \( X \) in a special way:

\[
\text{PX } S \text{ thinks that by producing an utterance of } X \text{ he will likely get his audience, } A, \text{ to see that } S \text{ intends } A \text{ to think that } p \text{ at least partly on the basis of recognising that } S \text{ uttered } X \text{ intending } A \text{ to think that } p. 
\]

This reflects the fact that for fixed \( P \), \( S \)'s choice of \( X \) is severely constrained, and conversely, the fact that for fixed \( X \), \( S \)'s choice of \( P \) is severely constrained. (One type of externalist objection to PX seems particularly wide of the mark. Community standards, causal chains, and divisions of linguistic labour may well bear on aspects of the contents of some of \( S \)'s mental states, including the contents of some of the intentions \( S \) forms. But that does not mean such considerations bear on the formation of those intentions. Their formation is constrained only by \( S \)'s own cognitive life.) With this in mind, we can now formulate the following question:

\[
\text{FQ } \text{What types of cognitive constraints are there on the pairing of a meaning intention } M \text{ and a sentence } X \text{ in order for } S \text{ to utter } X \text{ with } M? 
\]

I am construing FQ in a way that makes it the flip-side, as it were, of PQ. To say, as I did in my review of Grice’s book, that “the formation of genuine communicative intentions by \( S \) is constrained by \( S \)'s expectations” (1992: 552) is to say that the formation in \( S \)'s mind of an intention to get \( A \) think that \( p \) by way of recognising that \( S \) uttered \( X \) intending \( A \) to think that \( p \) is constrained by \( S \)'s expectations of the likelihood of success.\(^{44}\) So:

\[
\text{If, as Grice suggests, what } S \text{ meant by uttering } X \text{ on a given occasion is [constitutively] determined by certain interpreter-directed intentions, then assuming he is being co-operative } S \text{ cannot mean that } p \text{ by uttering some sentence } X \text{ if he believes it is impossible for his audience } A \text{ (or at least any rational, reasonably well-informed interpreter in } A \text{'s shoes) to construe him as meaning that } p. \text{ Among the things constraining } S \text{'s communicative intentions are things for which we shall probably need theories, for example, } S \text{'s grasp of the meanings of the words he is using (whatever this amounts to),}
\]

\(^{44}\) On this point, see also Donnellan (1968), Grice (1971, 1989), Schiffer (1972), and Neale (2004, 2005). I talked about expectations constraining the formation of intentions in 1992 and about beliefs doing so in 2005. The change is due to the fact that I have come to believe that an expectation is a special type of belief. Nothing turns on this here.
and S’s grasp of the way syntax impinges upon the meanings of sentences (whatever this amounts to). Other things constraining S’s communicative intentions are S’s beliefs about the world, his (tacit) beliefs about the sorts of interpretive principles A will be employing, and his (tacit) estimation of A’s capacity to work certain things out. (The list is not meant to be anywhere near exhaustive). (Neale 2005: 181)

A great deal is rolled up in (i) my talk here of “S’s (tacit) estimation of A’s capacity to work certain things out” and also in (ii) my earlier talk of “S’s conception of . . . A’s ability to work out what S is up to” (1992: 552). As noted earlier, (a) the Gricean maintains that there is no mention of A’s actual capacity or ability in an answer to CQ and no mention of “the context of utterance, the topic of conversation, [or] background information” (1992: 553) because (a) the Gricean answer is that what S meant is wholly constitutively determined by S’s meaning intentions in uttering X, and (b) a conflation of CQ with either PQ or FQ is involved in the charge that the Gricean answer to CQ smuggles in such things as the context of utterance, the topic of conversation, background information, considerations of salience or relevance, conventions, norms or maxims.

Now strictly speaking, the things just mentioned—context, topic, salience, relevance, etc.—will not figure in an answer to FQ either. What will figure in an answer are S’s takes (i.e. beliefs and expectations about, or perceptions, conceptions or estimations of) such things (and, perhaps, also S’s takes on A’s conceptions of them). The takes, not the things takes are takes on, are what play rôles in the formation of genuine meaning intentions by S. Why? Because S’s takes of these and other things will impinge upon S’s estimation of A’s ability to work out what S is trying to accomplish by uttering X. (As I put it a moment ago, the formation of meaning intentions is constrained only by S’s own cognitive life.) So let us call such takes systolic determinants of the formation of meaning intentions.

FQ, like PQ, is a question in cognitive psychology and the philosophy of mind. An answer will make reference to (1) A’s grasp of the linguistic meaning of X (as constitutively determined by the conventions of the language to which X belongs—which may or may not be explained in terms of regularities in speaker meaning), (2) the informational contents of certain of S’s perceptual and doxastic states, and (3) cognitive principles and operations governing the identification, evaluation and integration of information arriving from various channels and sources, including especially information about the assumed linguistic meaning of X. And in so doing, the answer will specify the fully general, systematic component of an explanation of how speakers form the meaning intentions they do (For any individual case, there is much of course, that is not general or systematic but utterly specific to that case.) An answer to FQ, then, is not a pragmatic theory but a formatic theory, a theory of the flip-side of utterance interpretation, i.e. utterance planning. But the relation between formatics and pragmatics is as obvious as the reciprocal relation between speakers and audiences: audiences seek to understand and speakers seek to be understood, and both parties operate with this implicit assumption in play.

There is no obvious delimitation of the cognitive states whose informational contents are alluded to in (2) above. In principle, in any particular case, all sorts of information might
impinge upon S’s (tacit) estimation of A’s capacity to work out what S is trying to accomplish by uttering X (and thereby play rôles in the formation of the requisite meaning intentions by S). This will include (but will certainly not be restricted to) information flowing from S’s “takes” on (i.e. beliefs and expectations about, or perceptions, conceptions or estimations of) items such as those on the following list, Z′ (many of which are just twists on items on list Z): A’s fluency in the language to which X belongs; the extent to which A has been concentrating; the extent to which A is, or assumes S to be, a stickler for accurate or careful wording; the topic of conversation and the nature of the discourse thus far; the relative salience for A of certain objects in the immediate environment; the relevance to A of certain types of information; prior conversations with A or people who know A; the extent to which S and A share specialized knowledge of what is being discussed; A’s general knowledge; A’s general intelligence; the extent to which A can be presumed to presume that S is a rational, cooperative speaker; the extent to which A can be presumed to presume that S is operating in accordance with various norms, conventions, practices, maxims, canons, and community standards; the extent to which A’s interpretation (in general, or given the topic at hand) may be affected by emotional considerations; the extent to which S’s choice of words (in general, or in the present situation) may affect A emotionally. Again, the list is far from exhaustive. (For a start we could certainly add to Z′ S’s conceptions of A’s conceptions of some of the things on Z, or, for that matter, some of the things on Z′.)

The reason these sorts of things are on Z′ is that S is seeking to communicate something to A and the things on Z′ are things that S may reasonably presume to potentially figure in whatever processes lead to the formation in A’s mind of a hypothesis about what S means. So, to greater or lesser degree, S’s conceptions of many of these things may bear causally on the formation of S’s meaning intentions, understood as mental states that are ontologically dependent on the pairing, by S, of proposition with the content that p and an utterance-type X in the special way described in PX. (S thinks that by producing an utterance of X he will likely get A to see that he intends A to think that p at least partly on the basis of recognising that S uttered X intending A to think that p.) To the extent that S’s conception of anything on Z′ bears causally on the formation of S’s meaning intentions, let us say that it is a formatic determinant of S’s meaning intentions and that it formatically determines (together with many other things) those intentions.

We can now bring together CQ, PQ, and FQ:

The question of what constitutively determines what S means on a given occasion and the question of what is involved in epistemically determining (i.e. ascertaining or identifying, or at least forming a hypothesis about) what S means on that occasion are conceptually distinct, even though the formation of S’s meaning intentions is typically formatically determined, in part, by S’s conceptions of the sorts of things S may reasonably presume to be potentially involved in the process of A’s forming a hypothesis about what S means.
18. CONFLATING CONSTITUTIVE AND EPISTEMIC DETERMINATION

Consider the following little argument about S;M (or what S conversationally implicates):

**Argument I**  [Invalid or Trivial]

P1  Determining the content of what S ;means in uttering X (on a given occasion) requires making pragmatic inferences;

So:  The content of what S ;means in uttering X (on a given occasion) is determined, at least in part, by pragmatic inference.

The premise of this argument concerns *epistemic* determination. (For the pragmatist, this amounts to identifying certain intentions S had in uttering X. But we do not need to assume this in examining the argument.) Read as a claim about *epistemic* determination, the conclusion is simply a restatement of the premise. Read as a claim about *constitutive* determination, it simply does not follow from the premise. (Which is good, because there is no reason to think it is true when so-read). So there is nothing in this little argument to threaten the intentionalist claim that the meaning intentions S had in uttering X are the sole content suppliers for S;M (the content of what S ;means).

Argument I is really no better than Argument II:

**Argument II**  [Invalid or Trivial]

P1  Determining the meaning intentions S has in uttering X (on a given occasion) requires making *pragmatic inferences*;

So:  The meaning intentions S has in uttering X (on a given occasion) are determined, at least in part, by pragmatic inference.

The premise of this argument concerns *epistemic* determination. Read as a claim about *epistemic* determination, the conclusion is simply a restatement of the premise. Read as a claim about *constitutive* determination, it simply does not follow from the premise.

Now consider the following common argument about the determination of S;dM (or what S says):

**Argument III**  [Invalid or Trivial]

P1  The content of what S ;means in uttering a given sentence X (on a given occasion) is not fully determined by XM (what X itself means, the linguistic meaning of X, as determined by the conventions of the language to which X belongs);

P2  Determining those aspects of what S ;means in uttering a sentence X (on a given occasion) that are not determined by XM requires making *pragmatic inferences*;
So: The content of what \( S \) means in uttering \( X \) (on a given occasion) is determined, at least in part, by **pragmatic inference**.

This argument is either invalid or trivial. Premise 1 concerns *constitutive* determination. By contrast, Premise 2 concerns *epistemic* determination. Read as a claim about constitutive determination, the conclusion does not follow from the premises (which is good, because it is *false* when so-read). But if it is read as a claim about epistemic determination, it is an obvious truth (because of the existence of third-person pronouns, for example). So there is nothing in this argument to threaten the intentionalist account of the sole *what is said*.

The following argument has essentially the same problem:

**Argument IV**  [Invalid or Trivial]

P1 The content of what \( S \) means in uttering a given sentence \( X \) is not fully determined by \( XM \);

P2 Determining those aspects of the content of what \( S \) means in uttering \( X \) that are not determined by \( XM \) requires taking into account facts about *the context of utterance*;

So: The content of what \( S \) means in uttering \( X \) is determined, at least in part, by facts about *the context of utterance*.

Here, Premise 1 concerns constitutive determination, whereas Premise 2 concerns epistemic determination. If the conclusion is read as a claim about constitutive determination, it does not follow from the premises. (Furthermore, I maintain, the conclusion is false when so-read, but let’s not be detained by this wisdom here.) And if the conclusion is read as a claim about epistemic determination, then it is just a clumsy restatement of Premise 2—or rather it would be if ‘taking into account’ were inserted between ‘by’ and ‘facts about the context of utterance’—and is obviously true when so-read.

The following argument has a different problem:

**Argument V**  [Valid but boring]

P1 The sole suppliers of any content had by what \( S \) means in uttering \( X \) are \( XM \) and (objective, observable, external, extensional) facts about the context of utterance;

P2 No facts about \( XM \) and no (objective, observable, external, extensional) facts about the context of utterance are determined, even in part, by the meaning intentions \( S \) has in uttering \( X \).

So: The meaning intentions \( S \) has in uttering \( X \) are not even partial suppliers of any content had by what \( S \) means in uttering \( Xs \).

This argument appears to be valid—at least assuming talk about supplying content is talk about the (partial) constitutive determination of content. No-one doubts Premise 2—not
even for the Gricean, contrary to a popular myth that confuses the meaning intentions \( S \) has in uttering \( X \) on a particular occasion with the self-perpetuating regularities (conventions) in acts of speaker meaning. But the truth of the Premise 1 is far from self-evident. (Indeed, it is precisely what the Gricean is rejecting. And I maintain it is false, along with the conclusion, but let’s not be detained by this wisdom right now.)

We find a similar situation with the following argument:

**Argument VI** [Valid but boring]

P1 The sole suppliers of any content what \( S \) means in uttering \( X \) has are \( X, M \) and the referential (and anaphoric) intentions \( S \) has in connection with any demonstrative or third person pronouns in \( X \).

P3 No fact about \( X, M \) is determined, even in part, by meaning intentions \( S \) has in uttering \( X \);

So: The meaning intentions \( S \) had in uttering \( X \) are not the sole suppliers of any content what \( S \) means in uttering \( X \) has.

Again, we have an argument that appears to be valid. But the truth of premise 1 is far from self-evident. (Indeed, I maintain it is actually false, along with the conclusion, but let’s not be detained by this wisdom here.)

One important moral that emerges from the foregoing is just how important it is to distinguish constitutive questions about what is involved in acts of meaning (whether acts of \( d \)meaning or \( i \)meaning) and epistemic questions about what is involved in interpreting acts of meaning (i.e. in forming of hypotheses about what speakers mean). But, as we saw earlier, it is important not to overstate the case: it is important to appreciate the ways in which epistemic considerations causally constrain the formation of the meaning intentions that constitutively determine what speakers mean.

**19. CONFLATING CONSTITUTIVE AND FORMATIC DETERMINATION**

The intentionalist is not committed to the conclusion of the following argument:

**Argument VII** [Invalid]

P1 The content of what \( S \) means by uttering \( X \) is wholly determined by the meaning intentions \( S \) has in uttering \( X \);

P2 The meaning intentions \( S \) has in uttering \( X \) are partly determined by \( S \)'s beliefs about the context and about his audience, \( A \), insofar as they bear on \( S \)'s expectations of success, in uttering \( X \), in getting \( A \) to recognise the meaning intentions \( S \) has in uttering \( X \).

So: The content of what \( S \) means by uttering \( X \) is partly determined by \( S \)'s beliefs about the context and about \( A \), insofar as such beliefs bear on \( S \)'s expectations...
of success, in uttering $X$, in getting $A$ to recognise the meaning intentions $S$ has in uttering $X$.

The argument is invalid. Premise 1 concerns *constitutive* determination—the facts that constitutively determine the content of what $S$ means by uttering $X$ on a given occasion, the facts *in virtue of which* the content of what $S$ means by uttering $X$ is whatever it is. Premise 2, by contrast, concerns *formatic* determination: it describes part of a *causal* story about the formation of meaning intentions. Consequently, there is no univocal way of reading ‘determined’ in the conclusion that renders the argument valid. (There is no salvation to be found by recasting the argument with ‘is a function of’ replacing ‘is determined by’.)

The intentionalist story is untouched: The formation of a particular meaning intention $M$ with which $S$ utters $X$ (on a given occasion) is causally constrained by $S$’s expectations of success, in uttering $X$ in getting $A$ to recognise that $S$ is uttering $X$ with $M$, i.e. expectations of success, in uttering $X$, in getting $A$ to identify that part of what $S$ means by uttering $X$ that is *constitutively determined* by $M$. ($S$ may mean more than one thing.)

The moral to be drawn from the invalidity of Argument VII is that intentionalist theses to the effect that the meaning intentions $S$ has in uttering $X$ are the sole content suppliers for what $S$ means (whether what $S$ means or what $i$ means) are neither refuted nor rendered *superfluous* by the fact that such things as $S$’s beliefs about the context, $S$’s beliefs about $A$, and $S$’s grasp (or beliefs about $A$’s grasp) of what $X$ means are *causally* implicated in the formation of $S$’s meaning intentions. To think otherwise is to conflate constitutive and formatic determination.

We can draw two immediate conclusions from all of this. First, any debate about which of pragmatic inference or context is the crucial extralinguistic supplier of any content had by $SdM$ is the pointless product of conflating constitutive and epistemic questions. Neither pragmatic inference nor context is a content supplier for either $SdM$ or $SiM$. Second, no good argument has been given against rich content accounts of $SaM$ in the linguistic pragmatist tradition. More speculatively, I suggest there is no obvious barrier to an intentionalist position that maintains meaning intentions are the sole content suppliers not just for $SiM$ but also for $SdM$.

Stephen Neale  
Program in Philosophy  
CUNY Graduate Center  
New York, USA