Chapter 2
The Gricean framework

The term 'implicature' was coined by Paul Grice, who was one of the first to identify and analyse the phenomenon. Grice proposed a theory of how implicatures are generated, according to which they arise from general principles of rational communication. This account forms the background to all subsequent work on the topic, and in this chapter I shall set it out and discuss a problem concerning its interpretation.

1. Saying and implicating

Grice's first detailed presentation of his views on implicature was in his 1967 William James lectures, given at Harvard. The ideas appeared in print in his 1975 paper 'Logic and Conversation' (Grice 1975), which was later reprinted, together with the rest of the William James lectures, in his 1989 collection *Studies in the Way of Words* (Grice 1989).[1] An earlier 1961 paper 'The Causal Theory of Perception' (Grice 1961/1989) also contains some discussion of implicature. Grice expressed his views tentatively, so it is not always easy to pin hard-and-fast commitments on him.[2] I shall discuss an important interpretative issue later in this chapter (see section 5), but for the most part I shall be concerned with the view of implicature that is proposed in Grice's writing and that he is commonly taken to endorse, without worrying whether Grice himself would in fact have endorsed it without qualification. I shall refer to this view as *the Gricean framework*.

Grice introduces the notion of implicature by contrasting it with that of *saying*. According to Grice, what a person says by an utterance is 'closely related to the conventional meaning of the words (the sentence) he has uttered' (Grice

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[1] Where a paper is reprinted in the 1989 collection, I shall cite it 19XX/1989, where 19XX is the original publication date. Where page numbers follow, they refer to the 1989 reprint edition.

[2] For examples of Grice's caution in expressing his views about implicature, see Turner 2001. Grice himself humorously notes the suggestion that his remarks employ a new form of speech act, to be represented by an operator called *quessertion*, read as 'It is perhaps possible that someone might assert that ...'. (Grice 1982, reprinted in Grice 1989, p.297).

1978/1989, p.25), and for a hearer to grasp what is said, he or she will need to know these conventional meanings (and resolve any ambiguities), together with any relevant references (of proper names, indexicals, and so on). For many purposes, what a speaker says by an utterance can be identified with the proposition they express. Strictly speaking, however, in order to say something, in Grice's terms, it is not sufficient to produce an utterance with an appropriate conventional meaning. As Stephen Neale stresses (Neale 1992, p.523), for Grice an utterer counts as *saying* that p only if they *mean* that p — which for Grice involves having a self-referring intention of the sort described in Grice's theory of meaning (Grice 1957, 1968, 1969, all reprinted in Grice 1989). Omitting many complications, a speaker S means that p by utterance x, if S intends to get their hearer H to believe that p (or to believe that S believes that p), and to achieve this in part via the hearer's recognition of this very intention. If an utterer does not have an appropriate intention of this kind (for example, because they are being ironic), then they merely *make as if to say* p, rather than saying p (Grice 1978/1989, p.41, p.53). In short, the speaker must both have meant what they say and have found words with the correct conventional meaning to convey it. The *utterer's meaning* (or *speaker's meaning*) fixed by their communicative intention must coincide with the *sentence meaning* conventionally associated with the words used (Grice 1969/1989, pp.87–8, 1968/1989, pp.120–1). I shall return to the distinction between saying and making as if to say later in this chapter.

On the one hand, then, we have what a speaker literally said (or made as if to say) by an utterance. However, this may not exhaust what is communicated by the utterance. In the exchange discussed in the previous chapter, Mr Bronston said that his company had an account in Zurich, but additionally implied that he himself had not had an account there. Thus, on the other hand, we have what (if anything) the speaker additionally implied by it. Grice notes that various everyday words might be used in this context, including 'imply', 'suggest', 'indicate', and 'mean' (1989, p.86, also 1975/1989, p.24, 1968/1989, p.118). To avoid choosing between these terms, he introduces the semi-technical term 'implicate' and the nouns 'implicature' (the act of implicating) and 'implicatum' (what is implicated).

For Grice, what a speaker says (or makes as if to say) is the vehicle of implicature. From the speaker's point of view, what is said is, in part, the means

to successfully implicating something, and from the hearer's point of view grasping what is said is, in part, the means to recovering the secondary meaning that is implicated. ('In part' since it will not be possible to infer what is implicated *solely* from what is said; other factors too will play a role, such as knowledge of conversational principles, context, background knowledge, and so on.) Speakers implicate one thing by saying another, and hearers recover what is implicated by understanding what is said. Although the implicata of our utterances are often essential to our communicative exchanges, they do not affect the truth conditions of the utterances, which are determined only by what we say. In this respect implicatures differ from the *presuppositions* of an utterance (that is, propositions which must be true in order for the utterance to have a truth value), and from *entailments* of utterances (propositions whose falsity entails the falsity of the utterance). (Of course, implicata have truth values; but their truth values are independent of those of the utterances that generate them.)

In 'Logic and Conversation' Grice introduces two broad categories of implicature, which he calls *conventional* and *conversational*. These are similar in that neither affects the truth-conditions of the utterance that is used to convey them, but in other respects they are very different. Consider the following example, which is Grice's own:

(1) He is an Englishman; he is, therefore, brave. (Grice 1975/1989, p.25)

This conveys (a) that the person referred to is both an Englishman and brave, and (b) that the person's bravery follows from his being an Englishman. But, Grice claims, what is *said* is simply (a). From a truth-functional perspective, 'therefore' functions simply as a conjunction, and, strictly speaking, an utterance of (1) would not be false if it turned out that the person's bravery was not a consequence of his being an Englishman (Grice 1975/1989, pp.25–6). Hence, (b) is implicated rather than said. However, this implicature is different from ones such as Mr Bronston's, since it is determined by the conventional meaning of the words used. It is part of the meaning of the word 'therefore' that it carries the implicature that the second thing followed from the first. This implicature would be recognized by any competent hearer, no matter what the context, and it cannot be stripped away or

cancelled. This is what Grice calls a *conventional* implicature. Thus, knowledge of the conventional meaning of an uttered sentence (together with knowledge of relevant references) suffices to fix both what is said and what (if anything) is conventionally implicated by the utterance. As Stephen Levinson puts it, commenting on Grice's programme, 'what is *coded* by the linguistic system is the sum of what is *said* (roughly the truth-conditional content) and what is *conventionally implicated*' (Levinson 2000, p.14).

Now contrast (1) with an utterance of:

(2) Some Englishmen are brave.

Taken literally, this says that there exist brave Englishmen, which is compatible with all Englishmen being brave. However, (2) would normally be taken to imply that not *all* Englishmen are brave. Unlike the implicature in (1), however, this implicature is not part of the conventional meaning of the words used, and it could be cancelled — for example, by adding 'In fact, all Englishmen are'.

Or take the following sentences:

(3) You obviously think tenacity pays.

(4) Jones has beautiful handwriting.

Taken out of context, (3) makes a claim about the hearer's attitudes. But if uttered in response to a curious and persistent colleague, it will convey something about the speaker's attitude — namely, that the speaker finds the hearer tiresome and won't cooperate. Similarly, in many contexts (4) would simply express praise for a talent Jones possesses. However, if it were uttered by a professor of philosophy in response to a request for an opinion of a student's academic ability, it would convey the message that Jones is a poor philosopher. (This now famous example was first used by Grice in his 1961, p.130.)

Examples (2) to (4) are cases of what Grice calls *conversational* implicatures. These are nonconventional, pragmatic implicatures, which are not part of the conventional meaning of the words used. Unlike conventional implicatures,

conversational implicatures are at least to some degree context dependent, and they can be cancelled by a subsequent utterance. (I shall say more about cancellability below.) Grice allows that there may be other types of nonconventional implicature, in addition to conversational ones, but says little about them.

My focus in this thesis is on conversational implicatures, which are defeasible and not determined by the conventional meaning of the words used. (I shall, however, consider the suggestion that some of these implicatures are themselves conventional in another sense; see Chapter 5.) When I use the word 'implicature' without qualification, it should be understood to refer to conversational implicature.

2. Implicature generation

How is 'going beyond what is said' supposed to work in the case of conversational implicature? Grice claims that hearers can arrive at the implicated meaning by a process of inference, guided by the assumption that the speaker is trying to be cooperative. He points out that conversational exchanges are typically cooperative:

> Our talk exchanges do not normally consist of a succession of disconnected remarks, and would not be rational if they did. They are characteristically, to some degree at least, cooperative efforts; and each participant recognizes in them, to some extent, a common purpose or set of purposes, or at least a mutually accepted direction. (Grice 1975/1989, p.26)

He proposes a 'rough general principle' which speakers are expected to observe:

> Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged. (ibid.)

Grice calls this the *Cooperative Principle* (henceforth CP), and he claims that adhering to it involves respecting various maxims, which he assigns to four broad categories: Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner (1975/1989, pp.26–7).

Quantity concerns the amount of information provided and includes the submaxims: 'Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange)', and 'Do not make your contribution more informative than is required'. Quality includes the supermaxim: 'Try to make your contribution one that is true' and the submaxims 'Do not say what you believe to be false' and 'Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence'. Relation comprises the general maxim 'Be relevant', the application of which may be very complex. Finally, Manner includes the supermaxim 'Be perspicuous' and the submaxims 'Avoid obscurity of expression', 'Avoid ambiguity', 'Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity)' and 'Be orderly'.

Grice suggests that these conversational maxims are instances of more general maxims which govern other kinds of purposive behaviour, such as helping to fix a car or bake a cake. In such cases, too, the parties involved are expected to be cooperative and to make contributions that are appropriate in quality, quantity, relevance, and manner. Grice also speculates that it is not a contingent fact that we observe the CP and its maxims, but that anyone engaging in communication is rationally required to observe them (Grice 1975/1989, pp.29–30).

Grice allows, of course, that on occasions a speaker may fail to follow these maxims. He mentions four cases (1975/1989, p.30). First, the speaker may covertly *violate* a maxim, usually in order to mislead their hearer. Second, a speaker may explicitly *opt out* of a maxim, for example by indicating that they are unwilling to tell all they know. Third, a speaker may find that two maxims *clash*, forcing them to choose between them. For example, if a speaker has information that is important but of doubtful reliability then they will not be able to simultaneously respect the maxims of Quantity and Quality. Finally, a speaker may openly *flout* a maxim in a way that is obvious to their hearer. Cases of the last type, Grice proposes, are the ones that typically generate conversational implicatures. By openly flouting the CP in what they *say*, yet without ceasing to observe the CP by opting out, a speaker signals to their hearer that they wish to convey some further message that is consistent with the CP. Thus, even though the speaker seems to be flouting the maxims, they are in fact following them at another level. As Grice puts

it, they are *exploiting* the conversational maxims for the purposes of generating a conversational implicature (1975/1989, p.36).[3]

Take the following example:

(5) Ada: Do you like my new outfit?
Bea: You shouldn't be allowed to buy clothes.

Bea's utterance appears to violate the CP — specifically the maxims of Quantity and Relation (and probably Quality too). Bea must know that more, and more relevant, information, is required, and she ought to be able to provide it, since the question was about her personal opinion. But Ada has no reason to think that Bea has opted out of the conversational exchange; Bea is her friend and knows that choices of outfit are important to her. Ada can reconcile these facts only by supposing that Bea is seeking to convey something else — that Ada's outfit is horrible — which is informative and relevant but which for some reason Bea does not wish to say explicitly. Ada assumes that Bea thought Ada could work this out, and concludes that Bea is implicating that her outfit is horrible.[4]

In the case just described a maxim is actually flouted (exploited), but actual flouting is not necessary in order to generate a conversational implicature, in

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[3] Grice also allows that implicatures can also be generated by other maxims, such as aesthetic, social, and moral ones. Such implicatures form the class of *nonconversational*, nonconventional implicatures mentioned earlier. However, he holds that the conversational maxims and implicatures are the most important ones as far human communication is concerned (Grice 1975/1989, p.28).

[4] It might be objected that, taken literally, some of the maxims do not allow for indirect adherence of this kind, at the level of what is implicated rather than what is said. For example, the maxim of Quality tells us not to *say* something that we believe to be untrue, so a speaker cannot follow it by saying something they believe to be false, even if they thereby *implicate* something they believe to be true. Neale responds on Grice's behalf that this probably reflects a looseness of phrasing, and that adherence to the maxim at the level of what is implicated should be allowed to compensate for a violation of it at the level of what is said. Thus 'blatantly violating a maxim at the level of what is said but adhering to it at the level of what is implicated would not necessarily involve a violation of the Cooperative Principle' (Neale 1992, p.526).

Grice's view. In some cases, a conversational implicature is generated in order to *avoid* flouting. To borrow an example from Grice, suppose someone asks me where they can get petrol, and I reply 'There is a garage round the corner' (1975/1989, p.32). Here, what I say *would* flout the maxim of Relation ('Be relevant') if I didn't believe that the garage round the corner has petrol and is currently open. Thus, my hearer must assume that I believe those things in order to preserve the assumption that I am following the CP, and I thereby implicate those propositions. However, what I said didn't actually flout the maxim of Relation, since it is relevant that the station is round the corner. This contrasts with the case where Ada says that Bea should not be allowed to buy clothes, which is neither true nor relevant. In the latter case the implicature serves to *repair* a flouting by supplying a relevant meaning where one was lacking, whereas in the petrol station case it serves to *prevent* a flouting, by supplying additional information which makes the literal meaning relevant. Both cases, however, fit the same broad pattern, in that the implicated meaning must be presupposed in order to maintain the assumption that the speaker is being cooperative, and this is the heart of Grice's account.

More formally, Grice offers the following three-part definition of the conditions that must be satisfied for a conversational implicature to occur:

> A man who, by (in, when) saying (or making as if to say) that *p* has implicated that *q*, may be said to have conversationally implicated that *q*, provided that (1) he is to be presumed to be observing the conversational maxims, or at least the Cooperative Principle; (2) the supposition that he is aware that, or thinks that, *q* is required in order to make his saying or making as if to say *p* (or doing so in *those* terms) consistent with this presumption; and (3) the speaker thinks (and would expect the hearer to think that the speaker thinks) that it is within the competence of the hearer to work out, or grasp intuitively, that the supposition mentioned in (2) is required. (Grice 1975/1989, p.30–1)

Simplifying slightly, for a speaker to implicate q by saying p, it must be the case

that (1) the speaker is presumed to be being cooperative;[5] (2) this presumption requires the supposition that the speaker thinks that q, and (3) the speaker thinks that their hearer can work this out. I shall follow Wayne Davis in referring to these three conditions as, respectively the *cooperative presumption*, *determinacy* (since it is the condition that q specifically is required), and *mutual knowledge* (Davis 1998, p.13). Grice's definition does not explicitly state *who* does the presuming in (1), but the natural interpretation is that it is the hearer.

Note that Grice says that the speaker need only *make as if to say* that p. Though they utter a sentence that conventionally means p, they themselves need not mean that p — the sentence meaning does not need to be backed by a speaker meaning (which for Grice would be constituted by an intention to get their audience to believe that p by recognizing this intention). Thus, for example, when Bea utters the sentence 'You shouldn't be allowed to buy clothes', she does not really mean that Ada should not be allowed to buy clothes, and so (in Grice's terminology) does not *say* it, but merely makes as if to say it. What Bea makes as if to say is merely the means to implicating that Ada's outfit is horrible, which is Bea's real communicative aim. The same will go in many cases where a speaker actually flouts a maxim as a way of generating an implicature, and it will almost always be the case where they flout the maxim of Quality.

3. Calculability

Grice claims that, in the process of working out what a speaker is conversationally implicating (that is, determining what is required to maintain the cooperative presumption), a speaker will draw on the following pieces of information:

> (1) the conventional meaning of the words used, together with the identity of any references that may be involved; (2) the Cooperative Principle and its maxims; (3) the context, linguistic or otherwise, of the utterance; (4) other items of background knowledge; and (5) the fact (or supposed fact)

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[5] This is how Grice's first condition is often stated (and even misquoted), though he actually says that the speaker is 'to be presumed' to be being cooperative. I will say more about this issue in the next chapter.

> that all relevant items falling under the previous headings are available to both participants and both participants know or assume this to be the case (Grice 1975/1989, p.31).

And he suggests that the process will involve a calculation of the following general kind:

> [The speaker] has said that *p*; there is no reason to suppose that he is not observing the maxims, or at least the Cooperative Principle; he could not be doing this unless he thought that *q*; he knows (and knows that I know that he knows) that I can see that the supposition that he thinks that *q* is required; he has done nothing to stop me thinking that *q*; he intends me to think, or is at least willing to allow me to think, that *q*; and so he has implicated that *q*. (Grice 1975/1989, p.31)

An argument which derives an implicated meaning in this way is sometimes referred to as a *Gricean calculation*.

It is not clear what kind of argument a Gricean calculation is supposed to be. The way Grice sets out the calculation and the fact that he uses the word 'required' in clause (2) of the preceding definition of implicature ('the supposition that he is aware that, or thinks that, *q* is required in order to make his saying or making as if to say *p* … consistent with this presumption') suggest that the argument is meant to be deductive — that the cooperative presumption and the other items of information mentioned entail that the speaker is implicating that q. But, as Wilson and Sperber note, the third stage in the Gricean calculation ('he could not be doing this unless he thought that q') does not follow from the claims before it, and Grice does not explain how it is derived (Wilson and Sperber 1991, p.378). Moreover, it is doubtful that we could construct a deductive argument for it — at least without giving a complete list of the speaker's background beliefs. (Given suitably strange background beliefs, a speaker could regard any utterance as cooperative under its literal meaning.) Accordingly, many writers hold that the process of deriving an implicature is not one of deductive, demonstrative inference, but of abductive inference — inference to the best explanation of the data (Bach and Harnish 1979,

pp.92–3; Brown and Yule 1983, p.34; Leech 1983, pp.30–1; Levinson 1983, pp.115–6). On this view the conclusion that the speaker has implicated q is not logically required by what they have said (or made as if to say), given the context, the assumption that they are following the CP, and so on; rather, it is the most likely hypothesis given that information. It is not clear whether Grice would accept this, but for interpretative purposes I shall adopt a pluralistic position on which a Gricean calculation can be either deductive or non-deductive (or include both deductive and non-deductive elements), and I shall treat 'required' in this context as meaning 'required or highly probable'. (I shall say more about implicature recovery in Chapter 5.)

Grice adds that the hearer need not *actually* go through a process of inference of this type in order to see that a particular conversational implicature is present. They may just 'grasp intuitively' that it is (Grice 1975/1989, p.31). However, he insists that the implicature must be 'capable of being worked out' — the intuition must be replaceable by an argument. Otherwise, it will count as a conventional implicature, not a conversational one (1975/1989, p.31; 1978/1989, p.43).[6] The thought seems to be that if an implicature could not be calculated in the way described, then it could only arise from the conventional meaning of the words used (assuming, that is, that it is not some other kind of nonconventional implicature, derivable from maxims of a different sort).

The claim that the intuition must be replaceable by an argument accords with Grice's wider views about reasoning, as set out in his posthumously published *Aspects of Reason* (Grice 2001). Here Grice distinguishes a laborious 'hard' way of reasoning, in which every step is spelled out, and an easier 'quick' way, which leaves gaps. The quick form still counts as reasoning, Grice argues, provided that

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[6] Compare the following passage from a 1981 paper, in which Grice makes the same point:

> [T]the final test for the presence of a conversational implicature had to be, as far as I could 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. (Grice 1981, p.187, quoted in Cummings 2009, p.137)

the agent *intends* that each step could be filled out in such a way as to create a valid argument and has the ability to do this filling out:

> we could say (for example) that x reasons (informally) from A to B just in case x thinks that A and intends that, in thinking B, he should be thinking something which would be the conclusion of a formally valid argument the premisses of which are a supplementation of A. … The possibility of making a good inferential step (there being one to be made), together with such items as a particular inferer's reputation for inferential ability, may determine whether on a particular occasion we suppose a particular transition to be inferential (and so to be a case of reasoning) or not. (Grice 2001, p.16)

As Richard Warner notes in his introduction to the volume, this offers an attractive view of the nature of the reasoning Grice attributes to speakers and hearers in his theory of speaker meaning (reasoning about the speaker intentions, the hearer's recognition of these intentions, and so on). People do not go through this reasoning in the hard way, but they can be regarded as doing so in the quick way, provided they intend their interpretations of each other's utterances to be rational and have the ability to produce reasoning of the relevant kind. The arguments Grice sets out can be thought of as the ones they *would* construct if they were to fill in the steps (Warner in Grice 2001, pp.xxxii-v). (It might be objected that most people do not have the ability to construct these arguments, and that it took a highly trained philosopher of Grice's talents to produce them. Grice might reply that it is sufficient that people would recognize and endorse the arguments when presented with them.) We can take a similar view of the reasoning involved in deriving implicatures. Hearers may not actually go through a Gricean calculation when they interpret an utterance as carrying an implicature, but they intend their interpretation to be a rational one and the calculation sets out the sort of argument they would produce if they were to rationalize their interpretation.

To sum up, according to the Gricean framework, if an utterance U carries a conversational implicature q, then it must be possible to construct an argument (deductive or nondeductive) that derives the claim that the speaker is implicating

q from the conventional meaning of U, the CP, the context, background knowledge, and the fact that all this information is openly available. Following Davis, I shall refer to this claim as the *Calculability Assumption* (Davis 1998, p.14). The assumption serves as a supplement to the definition of conversational implicature, expanding on clause (2). To say that a proposition is required in order to make a speaker's utterance consistent with the cooperative presumption is to say that it is the one that would be uniquely identified by a Gricean calculation.

4. Particularized and generalized implicatures

Grice introduces a further distinction among conversational implicatures, between two sub-categories: *particularized* and *generalized*. Particularized implicatures are one-offs — cases where a person implicates a particular message by saying that p, but there is, as Grice puts it, 'no room for the idea that an implicature of this sort is normally carried by saying that *p*' (1975/1989, p.37). For example, take:

(6) It's chilly here.

Uttered by a person stepping off an aeroplane into the suffocating heat of a tropical country, this might carry the implicature 'It is extremely hot here'. Given the conditions, the speaker cannot really believe that it is chilly, so their utterance would flout the maxim of Quality if taken literally. To preserve the assumption that the speaker is observing the CP, the hearer must suppose that they are speaking ironically and expressing the thought that it is the very opposite of chilly. However, the reasoning depends on particular facts about the context of the utterance (that it is suffocatingly hot) and in other contexts the same sentence would generate a different implicature, or none at all. For example, if uttered in response to the question 'Do you want to go home?' it might generate the implicature that the speaker does want to go home. The implicatures generated by uttering this sentence are particularized, context-dependent ones.

Generalized conversational implicatures, on the other hand, are not context-dependent in this way; the words used 'would normally (in the absence of special circumstances) carry such-and-such an implicature or type of implicature' (Grice 1975/1989 p.37). For example, sentences of the form 'Some F are G' will normally

generate an implicature of the form ‘Not all F are G’. If the speaker believed that all F were G, they would have flouted the maxim of Quantity by not saying that they all were. Given the presumption that the speaker is observing the CP, the hearer therefore infers that the speaker does not believe that all F are G. Here the inference does not depend on facts about the particular context of utterance and will go through by default in all contexts.

Levinson helpfully provides a more explicit formulation of the difference between the two types of implicature:

> a. An implicature i from utterance U is *particularized* iff U implicates i only in virtue of specific contextual assumptions that would not invariably or even normally obtain
> b. An implicature i is *generalized* iff U implicates i *unless* there are unusual specific contextual assumptions that defeat it.
>
> (Levinson 2000, p.16)

Grice acknowledges that it may not be easy to distinguish generalized conversational implicatures from conventional implicatures (Grice 1975/1989, p.37), but as a noncontroversial example of the former he offers expressions with the form ‘an X’, which, he notes, normally generate the implicature that the X in question ‘does not belong to, or is not otherwise closely connected with, some identifiable person’. For example, an utterance of ‘John is meeting a woman this evening’ would normally carry the implicature that the woman in question was not John’s wife, relative, or close friend. However, this is not a conventional implicature of the phrase ‘an X’, since there are some contexts in which the phrase does not generate the implicature, and ones in which it generates the opposite one. (Grice cites ‘I broke a finger yesterday’, which implies that the finger *does* belong to the speaker.) It is better, Grice argues, to see this as a case of generalized conversational implicature, generated by the mechanisms described above:

> When someone, by using the form of expression *an X*, implicates that the X does not belong to or is not otherwise closely connected with some identifiable person, the implicature is present because the speaker has

> failed to be specific in a way in which he might have been expected to be specific, with the consequence that it is likely to be assumed that he is not in position to be specific. (Grice 1975/1989, p.38)

That is, by not being more specific about the identity of the X referred to, the speaker has seemingly violated the maxim of Quantity, and the assumption that he or she is being cooperative can be preserved only on the supposition that he was not in a position to be specific — that is, did not think that the X belonged to or was closely connected with some identifiable person. (I shall discuss this example further in Chapter 5.)

Grice identifies some other properties that are distinctive of conversational implicatures as opposed to conventional ones. The two most important of these (in addition to calculability and nonconventionality, discussed above) are *cancellability* and *nondetachability* (Grice 1975/1989, pp.39–40, 1978/1989, pp.43–4). Grice sometimes refers to these as *tests* for the presence of a conversational implicature (1981/1989, pp.270–1), though he says they are more like prima facie indications than knock-down tests (1978/1989, p.43). I shall consider them in turn.

First, cancellability. Because conversational implicatures depend on the assumption that the speaker is observing the CP, and because a speaker can explicitly opt out of doing this, it follows that a conversational implicature can be cancelled. This can be done either explicitly, by adding a further statement which indicates that one is opting out, or implicitly, by the context. For example, using 'somebody', rather than a more specific expression, normally generates the implicature that the speaker cannot identify the person referred to (following a similar line of reasoning to that for 'an X'), but this implicature can be cancelled, as the following examples illustrate (the examples are my own):

(7) *Explicit cancellation*. I heard somebody robbed you yesterday. In fact, it was your brother.

(8) *Implicit cancellation*. Somebody forgot to turn the headlights off. (Uttered in a context and with a tone of voice that makes it obvious that the speaker is referring to the hearer.)

Here the second sentence in (7) and the context in (8) make it clear that the speaker's use of 'somebody' was genuinely uncooperative (the speaker could have used a more specific term but didn't, presumably for stylistic reasons), and the usual implicature is cancelled.

The second indicative feature of implicature is nondetachability. Since conversational implicatures are generated by general inferential principles applied to the conventional meanings of the sentences uttered (together with context and background information), utterances with equivalent conventional meanings will generate the same implicature in the same context. Thus in most cases 'it will not be possible to find another way of saying the same thing, which simply lacks the implicature in question' (Grice 1975/1989, p.39). That is, conversational implicatures are typically not *detachable* from the content of the utterance. An exception is where the implicature is generated by flouting the maxim of Manner, in which case *how* a content is expressed will be crucial. Grice gives the following example: 'Miss X produced a series of sounds that corresponded closely to the score of "Home Sweet Home"' (1975/1989, p.37). Because of the roundabout way it is expressed, avoiding use of the word 'sing', this implicates that Miss X's singing was very bad. Saying the same thing in a simpler way would not generate this implicature.

A final feature of conversational implicature mentioned by Grice is indeterminacy. What is implicated by an utterance is, according to Grice, what must be supposed in order to preserve the assumption that the speaker is being cooperative. But in any given case there may be many different suppositions that could play this role. For example, Bea's utterance of 'You shouldn't be allowed to buy clothes' might be taken to implicate that the outfit Ada has chosen is dull, or that it is extravagant, or that it is too young for Ada, or that it is too old for Ada, or that it possesses some other negative feature. More generally, it might implicate that Ada's taste in clothes is poor, or that Ada should listen to Bea's advice, or some other, related claim. Grice accepts this point. In such cases, he claims, the

implicatum will be the disjunction of the various possible suppositions, and if this disjunction is open-ended, the implicatum will be simply indeterminate (1975/1989, p.40).

5. Implicature and speaker meaning

We saw earlier that a speaker S counts as saying that p, by uttering an appropriate sentence, only if they also *mean* that p — that is, only if they have an appropriate communicative intention. Otherwise, they merely make as if to say that p. This naturally raises the question of whether implicatures, too, must be backed by speaker meanings. For a speaker to implicate that q, must they also mean that q, on Grice's view? (And if they go through the motions of implicating q without actually meaning q, do they just *make as if to implicate* q?) Although this is a basic and important question, Grice himself does not address it directly, and says nothing about speaker meaning in his account of implicature in 'Logic and conversation'. In fact, there is a dispute over the correct interpretation of Grice here (Davis 2007; Neale 1992; Saul 2001, 2002a), and a case can be made for both positive and negative answers to the question, as I shall now explain.

There are several reasons for holding that Grice thought that speakers must mean what they implicate. When a person implicates something, it is natural to say that the implicated content is what they really *meant*, in contrast with what they literally said. Indeed, 'mean' is one of the everyday words (along with 'imply', 'suggest', and 'indicate') for which Grice introduces 'implicate' as a technical replacement (1975/1989, p.24, 1989, p.86). It is notable, too, that in Grice's general schema for working out an implicature, quoted earlier, the hearer's train of thought concludes with 'he [the speaker] intends me to think, or is at least willing to allow me to think, that *q*; and so he has implicated that *q*' (Grice 1975/1989, p.31) — which suggests that the speaker's intentions (or at least their wishes) are relevant in deciding whether or not an implicature is present (for more discussion of this passage, see Davis 2007, p.1659). Moreover, in 'The Causal Theory of Perception' (Grice 1961) Grice specifically says that an implicature must be backed by a communicative intention. Discussing an imaginary case where he has reported on the abilities of a student, Jones, by saying simply 'Jones has beautiful handwriting and his English is grammatical', Grice comments:

> I (the speaker) could certainly be said to have implied that Jones is hopeless (provided that this is what I intended to get across) ... (Grice 1961, p.130)

(It is true that the section in which this passage appears was not included when this paper was reprinted in *Studies in the Way of Words*, but there is no reason to think this was because Grice had changed his mind. In the reprint Grice says that the section was omitted because the material it contained was 'substantially the same' as that in 'Logic and Conversation' (Grice 1989, p.229)).

Another reason for thinking that conversational implicatures must be meant comes from Grice's views about the role of the presumption of cooperation in generating them. Hearers posit implicatures in order to preserve the assumption that speakers are being cooperative. But if speakers need not mean what they implicate, how does what they implicate support the presumption that they are being cooperative? How can behaviour that is unmeant and unintended be genuinely cooperative?

Finally, on the basis of a reading of Grice's other work, Stephen Neale argues that Grice held that what a speaker implicates is a part of what they mean overall (Neale 1992, pp.523–4). Neale points out that in 'Utterer's Meaning, Sentence-Meaning and Word-Meaning', Grice introduces the notion of what a speaker *conventionally means*, which breaks down into what they say and what (if anything) they conventionally implicate, and which is part of what they mean overall (Grice 1968/1989, p.121). Neale suggests that Grice would also have recognized the parallel notion of what a speaker *nonconventionally means*, which breaks down into what (if anything) they conversationally implicate and what (if anything) they nonconversationally nonconventionally implicate. (Nonconversational nonconventional implicatures are ones that are dependent on nonconversational maxims, such as aesthetic or moral ones.) Neale concludes that it is reasonable to think that Grice would have accepted the breakdown of what an utterer *U* means illustrated in Figure 1.

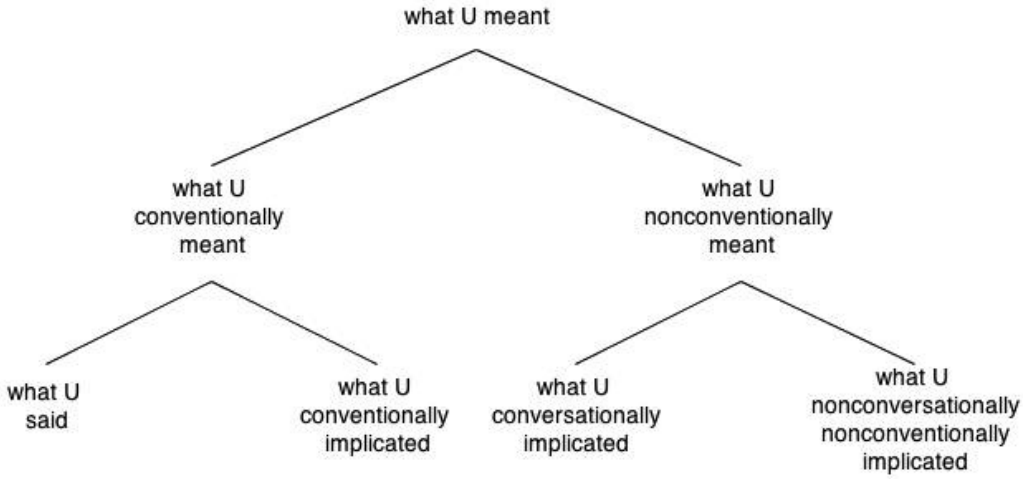

Figure 1: The breakdown of what a speaker means, according to Stephen Neale's interpretation of Grice. (Adapted from Neale 1992, p.523.)

On Neale's view, then, Grice's theory of conversational implicature is part of his wider project of explaining the conventional and nonconventional components of what a speaker means, and the reason there is no mention of speaker meaning in 'Logic and Conversation' is simply that Grice's theory of speaker meaning is assumed as part of the background.

There is a strong case, then, for thinking that Grice held that implicatures must be backed by speaker meanings. However, there are also objections to this view. The main objection is that there is no mention of speaker meaning in Grice's three-part definition of conversational implicature in 'Logic and Conversation' (discussed above), which, as Jennifer Saul stresses, focuses on the attitudes of the *hearer*, not the speaker (Saul 2001, pp.632–3, 2002a, p.241). According to the definition, the hearer must presume that the speaker is observing the conversational maxims (clause 1), and be able to work out that the supposition that the speaker has a certain belief is required in order for his utterance to be consistent with that presumption (clause 2). The only attitude of the speaker that is mentioned is the belief that the hearer can work out that the supposition mentioned in clause 2 is required (Grice 1975/1989, p.30–1). There is no mention of the speaker's *intentions* at all.

It may be replied that Grice does not offer this definition as a complete account of the conditions necessary for conversational implicature, but only of those conditions necessary for an implicature to count as a *conversational* implicature,

as opposed to a conventional or nonconversational nonconventional one. (The definition begins 'A man who, by (in, when) saying (or making as if to say) that *p* has implicated that *q*, may be said to have conversationally implicated that *q*, provided that...'; ibid). On this interpretation, other conditions will have to be met in order for an implicature to be present at all, and it may be that Grice took these to include the presence of a corresponding speaker meaning. This reading of Grice is adopted by Wayne Davis (Davis 2007, p.1660). It is true, however (as Davis acknowledges), that Grice elsewhere speaks of conversational implicatures being *generated by*, or *present because of*, or *arising from* the conditions mentioned in the definition, which suggests that those conditions are sufficient for the presence of a conversational implicature, rather than merely necessary for an implicature to count as conversational (for example, Grice 1975/1989, p.28, p.38, 1989, p.370). This reading, on which the conditions are sufficient, is often adopted in the subsequent literature (for example, Harnish 1991, p.330; Levinson 1983, p.100, p.103; Sadock 1991, p.366).

There is another reason for doubting that Grice would have accepted that implicatures must be backed by speaker intentions. Suppose that speakers must mean what they implicate — that is, they must have an appropriate communicative intention. But then why couldn't implicatures be recovered simply by recognizing these intentions, rather than going through Gricean calculations? Indeed, on Grice's view, for a speaker to mean q, they must intend to get their hearer to believe that q in part *by recognizing this very intention*. So, it seems, if implicatures must be meant, then a speaker who implicates q intends their hearer to come to believe q at least in part by recognizing their intention to communicate q, and not by going through a Gricean calculation. Thus, the speaker's conception of how the implicated message is to be recovered seems to be different from the one suggested by Grice. Finally, if a speaker intends their hearer to recover the implicated message by recognizing their intention to communicate it, why is it necessary for them also to believe that the hearer can work out that the implicated message is required to uphold the presumption that they are being cooperative (clause 3)?

It may be replied that Grice claims only that implicatures must be calculable, not that they must actually be calculated. Perhaps they can also be recovered by recognizing the speaker's intentions straight off, without any actual calculation

(though Grice himself does not mention this possibility). Moreover, the belief that the implicated message will be recovered by detecting the intention to communicate it is not incompatible with the belief that the message can be recovered by a Gricean calculation. The Gricean calculation could be the *means* to recognizing the intention; the speaker might (a) intend to get the hearer to believe that q in part by recognizing this very intention and (b) believe that the hearer can recognize this intention by going through a Gricean calculation. Indeed, in his informal description of the process of working out an implicature Grice makes it clear that he expects the hearer to move from the supposition that the speaker thinks that q to the belief that the speaker intends him (the hearer) to think that q:

> he knows (and knows that I know that he knows) that I can see that the supposition that he thinks that *q* is required; he has done nothing to stop me thinking that *q*; he intends me to think, or is at least willing to allow me to think, that *q*; and so he has implicated that *q*. (Grice 1975/1989, p.31)

We might compare the role of sentence meaning in saying. Understanding what someone says involves recognizing the speaker's communicative intentions, but it also involves recognizing the meaning of the sentence the speaker utters, and recognizing the latter is typically the means to recognizing the former.

This is a possible position, but, as it stands, it is still rather puzzling. Why should it be necessary for the speaker to believe that their communicative intention can be recognized by a Gricean calculation if it is not necessary for them to believe that it can be recognized *only* by that means (as Grice must allow, given that he denies that the hearer must actually go through the calculation process)? It is plausible that the speaker must believe that the hearer has *some* means of recognizing their intention, but it is unclear why they must believe that the hearer can do so specifically by a Gricean calculation.

What should we conclude from this discussion? There are cases for both positive and negative answers to the question about Grice's view of the role of speaker meaning in implicature, and I do not think we are justified in attributing to him a settled view on the matter. (Here, perhaps, we should take notice of what

he says about the tentative nature of his proposals.) However, lack of an answer constitutes a serious gap in the Gricean framework, and I shall return to the question in the next chapter, where I shall suggest a way of reconciling this tension in Grice's theory of implicature.

6. Applications

Grice's theory is primarily an account of what we might call *commonsense* implicatures — cases where it is intuitively obvious that an utterance conveys something beyond its literal meaning, as in the examples we have considered. However, the theory also has applications to more technical issues in philosophy of language and linguistics. In particular, it can offer an economical account of the conventional meanings of particular words. By making a distinction between what is said and what is further implicated, it is possible to hold that a word has a single conventional meaning while at the same time explaining how it typically conveys a further meaning. Grice uses 'or' as an example (1978/1989, pp.44–7). Sometimes 'or' is used in a 'weak' way equivalent to logical disjunction. In this sense, to say that p or q is simply to rule out the claim that both p and q are false, and a person could legitimately assert 'p or q' because they knew that p was true or that q was true or that both were true. Thus if one knows that p, then one can assert that p or q for any q at all. However, we typically use 'or' in a stronger sense, to indicate that we have a reason for thinking that p or q *other than* the fact that we think one or both of p and q are true, such as evidence that p and q are the only possible alternatives. In this sense, a person could not legitimately assert 'p or q' just because they knew that p was true or that q was true or that both were, and they could legitimately assert it without knowing any of those things. Faced with these different uses, we could say that 'or' is ambiguous, with two different conventional meanings, but Grice points out that we could instead explain the stronger meaning as a generalized implicature. If a speaker knows that p (or that q, or that p and q), then in most communicative contexts it will be more informative to assert it, rather than asserting that p or q. Thus if a speaker says that p or q, the hearer can uphold the presumption that they are observing the CP (and thus the maxim of Quantity) only by supposing that they do not believe that p (or that q, or both), and thus that they have some reason for asserting the disjunction other than the fact that they

believe one or both of the disjuncts to be true — which corresponds to the stronger sense of 'or'. Thus in normal circumstances this meaning is generated automatically by conversational implicature.

Grice suggests that we should prefer such explanations to ones that posit further conventional meanings, and he proposes a principle he calls 'Modified Occam's Razor' (and which has subsequently become known as 'Grice's Razor'): *Senses are not to be multiplied beyond necessity* (1978/1989, p.47). That is, we should not treat a word as having multiple conventional meanings unless there is no other way of explaining the different ways in which it is used. In particular, if we can explain one of a word's meanings as due to a generalized conversational implicature arising from the word's conventional meaning, then we should prefer that explanation to treating the meaning as a second conventional meaning. As François Recanati notes, because the implicature explanation derives from general assumptions and principles that are independently motivated, it is more economical than positing an extra sense, which would be an ad hoc move (Recanati 1989, p.296). Applying Grice's Razor in a particular case involves showing how the mechanisms of implicature could generate the secondary meaning in question, and also applying the various 'tests' for implicature, in particular, non-detachability and cancellability. In Stephen Levinson's words, this approach

> allows one to claim that natural language expressions do tend to have simple, stable and unitary senses (in many cases anyway), but that this stable semantic core often has an unstable, context-specific pragmatic overlay — namely a set of implicatures. (Levinson 1983, p.99)

Grice argues that this approach can be applied to deal with objections to some philosophical theories that use terms in a way that seems to clash with everyday usage. For example (a case that played a role in prompting Grice to develop his theory of implicature), some theories of perception characterize the sort of experience one has when seeing (say) a red object as the experience of *seeming to see* something red, and it may be objected that this conflicts with ordinary usage. One can have the experience in question when one is *sure* that one is seeing something red, but we would not normally say that we *seem* to see something red

unless we had some doubt about whether we really were seeing something red. In response, Grice argues that we can treat the indication of doubt, not as part of the conventional meaning of 'seems to see', but as a generalized conversational implicature, like the strong sense of 'or', which is generated by apparent violation of the maxim of Quantity. If one is sure one is seeing something red, one would normally say that one is seeing something red, not that that one seems to see something red. Thus in saying the latter, one implicates that one is not sure that one is seeing something red (Grice 1961/1989, ch.15). In this way, the objection is removed. Since implicatures do not affect the truth conditions of the utterances to which they attach, the existence of this implicature does not affect the truth of the statement that one seems to see something red, or of the theory to which it belongs.

Grice suggests there are many other contexts in which this approach might be applied to reconcile philosophical theories with the existence of layers or shades of meaning not accounted for by the theory. As examples he mentions claims involving the terms 'see', 'know', 'cause', 'responsible', 'actual' (1961/1989, p.237). He also sketches an application to the word 'true' (1978/1989, p.55–7) and considers (without fully endorsing) the suggestion that the existence claims implicit in utterances such as 'The present king of France is bald' are conversational implicatures, rather than presuppositions (1981/1989, ch.17). Later theorists have followed these hints, applying the Gricean framework (or an extended, revised version of it) to various other problems in philosophy of language (for example, Neale 1990; Recanati 1993; Salmon 1989).

These applications of the Gricean framework differ from the earlier uses of the framework to explain commonsense cases of conversational implicature, such as (5) and (6) above. First, the implicatures in the application cases are all generalized ones and arise from the use of particular words or concepts. Second, as Recanati notes, the applications extend the *scope* of the phenomenon of implicature (Recanati 1989, p.327). In the commonsense cases, it is intuitively obvious that something is implied beyond what is actually said, whereas in the application cases this is not so, and argument is required to establish that an implicature is present. The fact that the Gricean framework can be extended and applied in this way suggests that it is a fruitful research programme, and thus offers further support for

it. However, the applications depend on the soundness of Grice's basic account of how conversational implicatures are generated, in both particularized and generalized cases, and I shall focus primarily on that.

Conclusion

This completes my introduction of the Gricean framework. The framework has been, and continues to be, hugely influential in theorizing about the nature of implicature and (as we shall see in Chapter 5) about how implicatures are recovered. There are attractions to the idea that implicatures can be derived from general principles of communication, as opposed to being, on the one hand, one-off psychological interpretations or, on the other hand, conventions of language or of language use. The Gricean framework suggests that implicature is a rational phenomenon, which can be universally understood, and it thus holds out hope for an ethics of implicature based on general principles.

The framework faces many problems, however. In particular, there are some basic issues with Grice's definition of conversational implicature and the supplementary Calculability Assumption. The next chapter will look at these.