Chapter 4
Where the Gricean framework fails

The previous chapter argued that, if interpreted as a normative theory and enriched and revised in certain ways, the Gricean framework can avoid many of the objections raised against it. However, some problems remain, and in this chapter I shall set them out and argue that they seriously undermine the framework.

The first section of the chapter deals with the issue of speaker-dependency. On the normative reading of Grice we have been considering, what is conversationally implicated should be independent of the intentions and attitudes of the particular speaker involved. I shall argue, however, that conversational implicature, as defined by Grice, is not speaker-independent in this way. Although speaker intentions do not directly determine what is implicated, they indirectly determine it via their role in fixing relevant background knowledge, cooperative standards, and other inputs to the interpretative process. The next section of the chapter looks at the implications of this argument for the Gricean framework. It argues that they are serious and that the appropriate response is to adopt a different approach to implicature, which drops the requirement of calculability and gives a greater role to speaker intentions. This intention-centred account, I argue, can still retain a normative element, at least of a weak kind. Section 3 of the chapter looks at the concepts of utterer-implicature and audience-implicature, introduced by Saul as part of her revision of Grice's account. I noted that these notions might be employed to prop up the Gricean framework, but I shall argue that they cannot do the work required of them. The final section of the chapter looks at the implications of Grice's theory of implicature generation for the process of implicature recovery, arguing that here, too, it faces problems.

Although I proposed some (sympathetic) modifications to the Gricean definition of implicature in the previous chapter, the problems I shall highlight in this chapter will not depend on these modifications being accepted and would remain even if they were rejected. Where it is important, I shall indicate how the problems apply to both the original and revised versions.

1. The argument for speaker-dependency

1.1 Normativity and speaker dependency

As we saw in the previous chapter, it is plausible to interpret Grice's notion of conversational implicature as a normative one. On this view, speakers cannot make their utterances implicate whatever they want, any more than they can make them carry whatever conventional meaning they want. There is a standard of correctness for implicature that is independent of the speaker. What is implicated by an utterance is *what is required* to make sense of it as cooperative, where this is determined by general communicative principles, not by what the speaker intends to implicate, and it may differ from what the speaker and hearer think is required — notions for which Saul introduces the terms *utterer-implicature* and *audience-implicature*, respectively.

This is supposed to apply to particularized, context-dependent, implicatures as much as to generalized ones — if not to a greater degree. In the case of generalized implicatures, a normative, speaker-independent notion could be defined by generalizing across speakers. We could say that 'Some F are G' conversationally implicates 'Not all F are G' if speakers typically use it to implicate that (as they do). But this tactic cannot be used with particularized implicatures, since these depend heavily on context, and, Saul argues, Grice included audience-related criteria in his definition of implicature precisely in order to provide a speaker-independent element in such cases.[1] What is implicated by an utterance is what the audience is rationally required to believe in order to make sense of it as cooperative

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[1] Saul writes:

> Despite his focus on speaker intentions, [Grice] wanted what is said not to be entirely subject of the whims of individual speakers. Instead, he defined 'saying' in terms of both speaker meaning and sentence meaning, and defined sentence meaning by generalising across speakers. … Grice's inclusion of the audience in his definition of 'conversational implicature' serves a similar purpose. ... With conversational implicature, generalising across speakers would be inappropriate given the importance of context. Instead, he looked to the other participant in the conversation — the audience. (Saul 2002a, p.241)

in the context — where again this may not be the same as what the speaker or hearer actually *think* is required. Thus, if a sentence carries a certain implicature in a certain context X (where X includes the language used as well as other factors) when uttered by speaker A in the presence of speaker B, then it should carry the same implicature if uttered in X by speaker C in the presence of speaker D, and so on. What is conversationally implicated should not be dependent on beliefs and intentions specific to the individual speaker or hearer. This is not to say that *none* of the speaker's or hearer's beliefs are relevant. In its original form at least, Grice's conditions for the presence of a conversational implicature include that the speaker believes that the hearer can work out that the implicated message is required and that the hearer believes that the speaker is being cooperative. In the previous chapter I argued that, in the spirit of Saul's normative reading, we should remove or revise these conditions (Chapter 3, section 3). But even if we do not, they are general conditions for the existence of an implicature; the *content* of the implicature does not depend on further beliefs and intentions specific to the speaker and hearer in question.

In this part of the chapter I shall argue that conversational implicature is not in fact independent of the speaker's beliefs and intentions in this way, and thus that the concept of conversational implicature cannot play the proposed normative role. The overall argument is as follows. According to Grice, what is required to make sense of an utterance as cooperative can be inferred from the following items 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) 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).[2]

That is, what an utterance implicates is what is required to make sense of it as cooperative, given premises concerning (1) conventional meaning and references, (2) cooperativeness, (3) context, (4) background knowledge, and (5) mutual knowledge. Davis refers to these premises as the 'background constraints' relative to which an implicated meaning is required (1998, p.63). Assuming that only one conclusion can be derived from the premises, this would give a speaker-independent standard of what is required and hence implicated. However, this assumes that the relevant premises grouped under (1) to (5) can themselves be identified without reference to the speaker's beliefs, desires, and intentions, and this, I shall argue, is not so. I shall begin with item (4), background knowledge, which presents the biggest difficulty for Grice, and then look more briefly at items (1), (2), and (3).

The points that follow apply especially to particularized implicatures, which are more dependent on background information and contextual detail, though they apply in principle to all implicatures. (Some problems specific to generalized implicatures will be discussed in the next chapter.)

1.2 Background knowledge

I take it that the background knowledge employed in a Gricean calculation includes any information that is not specific to the utterance or its context but that is still necessary for interpreting the utterance. For instance, take the familiar example in which a philosophy professor devotes a reference letter to praising their student's handwriting skills. This implicates that the student is a poor philosopher, but this conclusion cannot be derived simply from the premise that the professor is being cooperative, together with the conventional meaning of the words and the context. We need to add the background knowledge that handwriting is irrelevant

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[2] I assume that Grice says 'supposed fact' under (5) because he requires only that the speaker should *believe* that the hearer can work out the implicature on the basis of the information listed, not that they can *actually* work it out. This was a point on which my revised version differed.

to philosophical ability. If good handwriting were in fact a highly reliable sign of philosophical ability, then the utterance would implicate that the student was a good philosopher, not a bad one. The same holds in many other cases. In general, inferences about contingent matters depend on a large number of background assumptions that are not made explicit in our reasoning. But since different sets of background assumptions will generate different inferences, this raises an important question: what is the relevant set of background assumptions for the generation of conversational implicatures? More precisely, since we are adopting a normative perspective, what is the *correct* set of background assumptions to use in working out what, if anything, an utterance conversationally implicates? The implicated content is the one that is *required* to make sense of the utterance as cooperative, but what are the background assumptions *relative to which* it is required? Given different background assumptions, different implicata will be required. (I speak of *assumptions* rather than *knowledge*, in order to avoid begging the question of whether these attitudes must be true.)

One suggestion is that the appropriate background is simply the truth — the set of all relevant true propositions. This would fit with the idea that what is conversationally implicated is speaker-independent. There is a problem with this suggestion, however. Consider the following exchange:

(1) Al: Do you think Cally will realize she's been tricked?
Bea: She's not Einstein.

We would naturally interpret Bea as implicating that Cally is stupid and will not realize that she has been tricked (and let us assume that this is the interpretation that Bea intends). Einstein was a genius, and in saying that Cally is not like him Bea implicates, by understatement, that Cally is stupid. But now suppose that, unknown to everyone, the real Einstein was in fact of very low intelligence, and that all the mathematical and scientific work for which he is known was actually produced by someone else and was falsely presented as Einstein's. Then if Bea's utterance is to be interpreted in the light of what is in fact true, a very different interpretation would be required. If the relevant background assumption is that Einstein was of very low intelligence, then Bea's utterance requires us to suppose

that she thinks Cally is actually very smart and *will* realize that she has been tricked. Here is another example:

(2) Raj: Do you think the king will win the battle?
Sal: Is the earth flat?

Here Sal answers by asking a rhetorical question, implying that the answer to Raj's question is the same as — and as obvious as — the answer to it. But of course *what* answer is implicated will depend on what we think is the answer to the rhetorical question. If Raj and Sal are living in a prescientific society where everyone thinks that the earth is flat, then Raj will naturally interpret Sal as implicating that it is obvious that the king will win. (Again, let us assume that this is what Sal intended.) However, if the relevant background is the truth, then this interpretation would be wrong, and Sal ought to be interpreted as implicating that it is obvious that the king will not win.

Now in these cases the speaker would not actually count as implicating the unintended reading (that Cally is smart, that the king will lose), since clause (3) of Grice's definition ((II) of the revised version) would not be met.[3] The speaker would not believe that the audience can work out that that reading was required, nor (on the revised version) would a typical hearer (contemporary to the speaker) be able to work out that it was required. So in these cases Grice would have to say that nothing is conversationally implicated, although the intended meaning is both utterer-implicated and audience-implicated. This is implausible, however. It would be inappropriate to base a pragmatic interpretation of an utterance on information unknown, not only to the speaker and the hearer, but to anyone in their society.

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[3] As a reminder, Grice's clause (3) and my revised version (II) run as follows:

> (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.
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> (II) It would be within the competence of a typical audience to work out that the supposition mentioned in (I) [= Grice's (2)] is required.

Such a normative standard would be far too strict. Indeed, if the normatively correct interpretation is the one that is *made available* to the hearer, then it should be the other reading (the intended one) that is the normative one. Bea's utterance makes available the information that Cally will not realize that she has been tricked, and Sal's utterance makes available the information that the king will win — and these utterances would make these pieces of information available to any other typical hearer in Bea's or Sal's societies.

(Note that the previous paragraph assumes that being able to work out that a certain reading is required involves being able to identify the appropriate background assumptions to use as well as being able to make the appropriate calculation from them. However, if working out the implicature simply involves being able to make the calculation itself, then Al and Raj (or any other typical hearer of Bea or Sal) could work out that the truth-based, *un*intended meaning is required, since they *would* be able to make the calculation *if* they were provided with the appropriate background information. In this case, clause (3)/(II) *would* be met and the utterances would carry the unintended implicatures. However, this would not make it any more plausible to think that truth is the relevant background for interpretation. If anything, it is even less plausible to claim that these utterances do in fact carry the unintended implicatures than to claim that they carry no implicature at all.)

These examples suggest that the appropriate background assumptions to use for interpretation are not those that are true but those that are *believed* to be true in one's community. This would mean that in the case of Bea and Sal the speakers' intended interpretations would be the normatively correct ones, since they are the ones that would be derived from the background beliefs current in their communities. However, there are further problem cases. For on many matters, different and conflicting background beliefs exist *within* a community, and these differences will affect the interpretation of utterances. Here is an example (suppose that Don and Ellie are both American citizens):

(3) Don: Do you think Senator Bloggs took the bribe?
Ellie: Well, he's a Republican.

Here, how one interprets Ellie's utterance depends on what background assumptions one makes about Republicans. If one assumes that Republicans are corrupt, then Ellie's remark would seem to implicate that Bloggs did take the bribe. If one assumes that Republicans are honest, then it would seem to implicate that Bloggs did not take the bribe. (I say *seem* to implicate, since, again, we have to allow for the effect of clause (3)/(II) of the definition. Even if we agree on what meaning is required to make sense of the utterance, that meaning will not actually be implicated unless the speaker believes that the hearer can work out that it is required, or (on the revised version) unless a typical hearer could work out that it is required.) Given that both views are widespread in Don and Ellie's community (assuming that to be the community of American citizens), which is the correct view to use in interpreting Ellie's utterances?[4]

One option would be to say that since there is a diversity of relevant background views in Ellie's community, there is no unique proposition required to make sense of the utterance as cooperative, and hence no conversational implicature is present at all. Instead, there are just an utterer-implicature and an audience-implicature, corresponding to what the speaker and hearer think is required, and reflecting their personal background beliefs. But again, this seems too strict. Suppose that Ellie is well known to her friends (including Don) for her strong dislike and distrust of Republicans. Then Don will naturally interpret her as implicating that the Senator took the bribe. This interpretation would be particularly natural if Don shares Ellie's views about Republicans, but even if he does not, it would be the obvious one to adopt. If Don knows Ellie's views about Republicans, then he will assume a negative view of Republicans for the purposes of interpreting her comment, even if he is himself a Republican supporter. Moreover, this seems to be the *correct* interpretation, given Ellie's beliefs and Don's knowledge of them. Ellie has successfully made her opinion available to Don, and there has been no confusion or lack of attention on either side. Her

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[4] Keith Frankish has suggested another example to me, as follows. Writing a reference for a former student, a philosophy professor includes the comment 'Her impact on professional philosophy may be similar to that of Ludwig Wittgenstein.' Depending on what we think of Wittgenstein, this might be taken as either the highest praise or an accusation of charlatanism.

opinion is not only utterer-implicated and audience-implicated, but conversationally implicated. There will be many cases like this, where different people within a community have different background beliefs or make different value judgements, each of which would generate a different implicature.

Note that Grice's condition (3) may also be met in this case. We may suppose that Ellie believes, correctly, that Don knows her background beliefs and can work out that the anti-Republican reading is required. The revised version of this condition, (II), might also be met. This says that a typical hearer could work out that the anti-Republican reading is required. Whether or not this is the case depends on what we mean by 'typical'. But since the aim of the revised condition was to capture our intuitions about implicature, the fact that we have an intuition that there is a conversational implicature in Ellie's case indicates that we should read 'typical' in a way that is compatible with this. For example, we might say that a typical hearer is one that has (among other things) the sort of familiarity with the speaker's attitudes that the speaker expects them to have — in other words, one that is a member of the community to whom Ellie might address this remark. Thus, we might say that a typical hearer for an utterance is one that is (a) alert, averagely informed, linguistically competent, and (b) a member of the community to whom the speaker might address the utterance (with the particular communicative intentions they have on this occasion). In short, a typical hearer is a competent potential addressee. In some cases, where the interpretation of an utterance depends on specific assumptions shared by few people, the pool of potential addressees might be very small — perhaps including only the person actually addressed. In such cases, an implicature might serve the function of a private code.

The Ellie example suggests, then, that the appropriate background beliefs for derivation of a conversational implicature are those of the speaker. It might be objected that this is covered by the suggestion made earlier in response to the Al and Raj examples — namely, that the appropriate background beliefs are those that dominate in the speaker's community. In this case (the objector may say), the relevant community is that of people who think that Republicans are corrupt. However, this does not remove the speaker-dependency, since the relevant community has to be identified by reference to the attitudes of the speaker. The reason we pick out the people who believe Republicans are corrupt as the relevant

community is that that belief is the relevant background assumption made by the speaker. This is speaker-independency in name only, since it holds only between people who share the same (relevant) beliefs as the speaker.

I think this is nearly right, but I want to make a modification, which gives priority to the speaker's *intentions* rather than their beliefs. Suppose Don is the father of Ellie's boyfriend, and that Ellie is meeting him for the first time. She knows that Don is a committed Republican, and, although she herself deeply distrusts Republicans, she is anxious to make a good impression and not to offend Don. So she conceals her real views, goes along with Don's comments on political matters, and intends her answer to his question about Bloggs to be understood in the light on Don's beliefs, not her own, and thus to implicate that the Senator did not take the bribe. Intuitively, this would seem the correct way to interpret Ellie's utterance. If she purposely conceals her own background beliefs about Republicans, then she has not *made available* her belief that Bloggs took the bribe. (This would remain true even if Don realizes that Ellie is concealing her real views. We know that what a person makes available to us may not be what they really believe.) This suggests, then, that the relevant background assumptions to use in calculating an implicature are those that the speaker *intends* to be used — where these will often, but not always, be ones the speaker actually holds.

If all this is right, then conversational implicature will not be speaker-independent, since in order to work out an implicature we shall need to know what background assumptions the speaker intends us to draw on. It may be objected that this is not a problem for Grice, even on a normative reading. For the speaker's intentions regarding the appropriate background assumptions to use could be treated as part of the *context* for their utterance. Then speaker-independency will be preserved, since all hearers who know the context will, by definition, make the same background assumptions. However, like the previous objection (that the relevant background assumptions are the ones that predominate in the speaker's community), this preserves speaker-independency only in name. On this view, implicatures are speaker-independent relative to a context, but contexts themselves are not speaker-independent, since they are defined by reference to the speaker's intentions. There will be agreement on what is implicated only between people

who share the same (relevant) intentions as the speaker, and bundling these intentions into the context does not change this.[5]

Finally, note that the background knowledge cases discussed above are similar to the Suleiman case discussed in the previous chapter, in which different interpretations are required depending on what background information the hearer has about Suleiman (that he is a good conversationalist, that he is a skilled masseur, and so on). The main difference is that in that case it was a matter of choosing from a range of different but compatible background beliefs (or choosing their disjunction), whereas in the cases discussed here the choice was between incompatible background beliefs. In the Suleiman case, I argued that we would have to say that nothing was implicated, since there were no grounds for picking out one interpretation over another, and the disjunction of all the possible interpretations was ruled out by clause (3). (The speaker did not believe that their hearer could work out that the disjunction was required.) However, given the discussion above, another option offers itself: namely, that the correct background information to apply is that which the speaker intends their hearer to apply. Assuming that the speaker believes their audience can detect these intentions (or, on the revised version, that a typical hearer could detect them) this would mean that there is an implicature in such cases after all.

I shall look at some consequences of speaker-dependency later in this section, and discuss a general objection to it. First, however, I want to look at other inputs to the Gricean calculation process and argue that these are speaker-dependent too.

1.3 What is said

The first item of information Grice lists as entering into the process of calculating what an utterance implicates is the conventional meaning of the words used and any references. This, fixes 'what is said' by the utterance, which Grice identifies with what is directly communicated — the proposition that is judged true or false

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[5] Note that if we were to regard information about speaker intentions with regard to background assumptions as part of the context of the utterance, then it becomes uncontroversial that condition (II) is met in cases like Ellie's. A typical hearer could work out such implicatures, since knowledge of the context *including the speaker's intentions* is taken as a given in the working-out process.

and that is the starting point for the calculation of anything that may be indirectly communicated by implicature.

There are several issues here. First, as Davis points out, it is not enough to know the conventional meanings of the words used and their referents; as interpreters we need to know their 'applied' meaning — their meaning on this particular occasion of use (Davis 1998, p.64). If a word has more than one conventional meaning, we need to know which one is relevant on this occasion. (Grice acknowledges that disambiguation is required in order to fix what is said; Grice 1975/1989, p.25.) However, on Grice's own view, applied meaning is fixed by *both* conventional (sentence) meaning and speaker meaning (Grice 1968, 1969, both reprinted in 1989). There is, therefore, no completely speaker-independent way of fixing what is said.

Davis extends this thought further, suggesting that even disambiguated conventional meanings are not decisive for interpretation. A speaker may misspeak (for example, saying 'coroner' for 'corner'), or use words in an unconventional way. Provided the hearer understands what the speaker means by the words on this occasion, Davis argues, the utterances in question could still generate conversational implicatures. In such cases, it would be speaker meaning that forms the premise for implicature calculation, not conventional (sentence) meaning (Davis 1998, pp.64–5).

A further problem for Grice arises from his identification of what is said with what is directly communicated. Conventional meaning (even when disambiguated) and referents determine only a minimal form of explicit content which does not correspond to our intuitive understanding of what is directly communicated. Here is an example (borrowed with simplification from Carston and Hall 2012)

(4) Max: How was the party? Did it go well?
Amy: There wasn't enough drink and everyone left early.

Here what Amy *says* (in Grice's sense) is simply that there was not enough drinkable liquid and everyone left early — which would be false if there had been plenty of lemonade and if someone somewhere did not leave early. But this is not

what Max will take Amy to be directly communicating. Rather, he will understand her to be saying something like:

(5) There wasn't enough alcoholic drink to satisfy the people at the party and so everyone who came to the party left it early.

This is the proposition Max will judge to be true or false, and it is from this that he will work out the implicated answer to his question — namely that the party did not go well. Cases like this are very common (for more examples, see Carston and Hall 2012).

The process of filling out the explicit content of an utterance in this way is called 'explicature', a term coined by Sperber and Wilson (1995), and relevance theorists argue that it is a pragmatic process, involving the application of general communicative principles like those involved in the derivation of implicatures (see, for example, Carston 2004a; Hall 2008; Recanati 2002; Wilson and Sperber 2002). This view is controversial, and other theorists argue that explicature is a semantic process involving the filling in of hidden indexicals, demonstratives, and variables present in the logical form of the utterance (for example, Stanley 2000). This is a large and complicated debate, which is not directly relevant to my main topic, and I shall not discuss it here. (The relevance theory approach to implicature recovery and the relation between explicature and implicature will be discussed more in Chapter 5.) Rather, I simply want to note that this gives us yet another reason for doubting that implicature is speaker-independent. If contextualized pragmatic processes are involved in explicature, then they may draw on information about the speaker. And if so, then even the basic step of establishing the explicit content that forms the starting point for implicature calculation will not be speaker-independent.

1.4 Cooperativeness

Another premise in a Gricean calculation is that the speaker is being cooperative, following the CP and its maxims. Moreover, there must be a further judgement to the effect that what the speaker says is *not* cooperative — that the utterance cannot be taken at face value, consistently with the premise that the speaker is being

cooperative. But what counts as being cooperative? A normative account of implicature will need a standard of cooperativeness to guide our judgements on this matter. Grice spells out cooperativeness in terms of adherence to the maxims of Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner, but again these need interpretation, and I shall argue that we cannot determine whether an utterance meets them without taking into account the speaker's attitudes. I shall consider each maxim in turn.

The first is the maxim of Quantity, which says that speakers should be as informative as is required and no more informative. But what amount of information is required in any given situation? There is no clear speaker-independent standard, and the same sentence might be regarded as either sufficiently or insufficiently informative, depending on who uttered it. Consider a reference letter case. Suppose a hiring committee receives a reference letter for Rebecca, an applicant for a philosophy lectureship, which consists simply of the following sentence:

(6) Rebecca is a good philosopher and I recommend her to you.

Does this violate the maxim of Quantity? It is plausible to think that the answer depends on who the committee think wrote it. If they think it was the famously uncommunicative Professor A, who rarely agrees to write reference letters at all and never writes more than a few words, then they will probably see it as providing as much information as they can expect and take it at face value. On the other hand, if they think it was written by Professor B, who usually writes detailed reference letters running to several pages, then they will regard it as uncooperatively short and probably read it as implicating that Rebecca is not a very good philosopher and is not really being recommended. This indicates that cooperativeness with regard to information quantity is speaker-relative, and that hearers may need to consider the speaker's attitudes and intentions in order to judge whether it is being violated.

The next maxim is the maxim of Quality, which says that speakers should not say things they believe to be false or for which they lack adequate evidence. The speaker-dependency here is obvious. Since the maxim makes reference to what the

speaker believes and what evidence they have, there is no speaker-independent way of determining whether an utterance violates it. If the speaker believes that p is false or if they have inadequate reasons for believing p, then they are violating the maxim of Quality if they say that p, even if p is true and objectively well supported by evidence. (I assume that what matters is the evidence the speaker actually *possesses*. Even if there is good evidence that p, the speaker violates the maxim of Quality if they are not aware of the evidence.)

There is also room for speaker-dependency in the notion of adequate evidence. Different speakers may have different conceptions of what counts as adequate evidence (different evidential standards). Some people are quicker to jump to conclusions than others. It is not clear that there are any independent norms available in this area, and even if there were, it is the speaker's own norms that matter in determining whether they are respecting the maxim of Quality. If I assert that aliens exist on the basis of evidence that is in fact flimsy but that I regard as adequate, then it is plausible to think that I have not violated the maxim and should not be taken to be implicating something. But if a speaker with the same evidence but much stricter evidential standards says the same thing, then they would be violating the maxim and might be appropriately interpreted as being ironic.

Next consider the maxim of Relation, which says that contributions should be relevant. Now, as we saw in section 1.2 above, what counts as relevant to a conversation varies with background assumptions. A comment about a student's handwriting might be relevant to a philosophical reference if handwriting is taken to be a good indicator of philosophical ability. Given the right background assumptions, any comment could be relevant to any exchange. So determining whether an utterance violates the maxim of Relation involves determining what background assumptions to apply, and, as we saw, this involves considering the speaker's intentions.

Moreover, even given fixed background assumptions, there is still room for judgements of relevance to vary depending on who the speaker is. For example, consider this exchange:

(7) Freda: Why should we vote for Smith?
Jack: She has a strong policy on protecting frogs.

Whether Jack's reply is relevant depends on Jack's attitude to frogs. If Jack is an animal-lover obsessed with protecting amphibians, then his reply is a relevant response to Freda's question under its literal meaning. Jack is being straightforwardly cooperative, and there is no reason to think he is implicating anything. But if Jack cares nothing for wildlife and regards frog protection as a trivial issue, then his reply is not relevant under its literal meaning and implicates that there is no good reason to vote for Smith. Thus, whether or not there is an implicature in this case depends on the speaker's attitudes.

In other cases, the speaker's attitudes may determine an utterance's *degree* of relevance or irrelevance, and thus *what* it implicates. Consider:

(8) Ed: Do you like this shirt?
Joy: It has lovely buttons.

Here Joy's reply is not directly relevant to Ed's question, and its lack of relevance signals that Joy is implicating something. However, *what* Joy is implicating depends on how relevant remarks about buttons are, which in turn depends on Joy's attitude to buttons. If she prizes buttons and judges items of clothing by the quality of their buttons, then she is praising a relevant feature of the shirt and implicating that she likes it. However, if she regards buttons as trivial, then she is praising an irrelevant feature and implicating that she dislikes it.

Note that the different interpretations in these cases depend, not on different background assumptions about animal welfare and clothing accessories, but on different values or preferences. Joy need not think that buttons are objectively important, but just have strong personal feelings about them. There will be many cases like this, where an utterance's relevance to a conversation depends on what the speaker values. In the absence of objective standards of value on the matters in question, there will be no speaker-independent way of interpreting these utterances.

Finally, similar issues arise with the maxim of Manner, which includes submaxims requiring speakers to avoid obscurity and ambiguity and to be brief and orderly. The problem again is that there are no clear speaker-independent

standards on these matters. For example, what counts as obscurity? It will depend on context: wording that would be obscure in a teacher's comment on a third-grade pupil's work might not be obscure in a supervisor's comments on a PhD thesis. Moreover, there is room for different styles within each type of context. For example, what is the correct type of language to use in a reference letter? Suppose a reference letter for Rebecca, a philosopher, concludes with the following statement:

(9) I can sum up my view of Becks by saying that she is one cool philosophy dude.

Does this violate the maxim of Manner by using obscure, slang terms and phrases ('Becks', 'one' (for 'a'), 'cool', 'dude')? Whether the hiring committee reading the letter think so plausibly depends on who they think wrote it. If they think it was Professor C, who likes to present himself as youthful and hip and usually writes in an informal style reflecting his (rather dated) ideas of youth culture, then they will probably take the comment at face value, as expressing high praise of Rebecca. It they think it was written by the conservative Professor D, who usually writes in a very formal style, then they will probably read it as deliberately flouting the obscurity submaxim and implicating that the professor does not take Rebecca seriously as a philosopher. (We can also imagine the reverse case in which a formal and old-fashioned reference would implicate a negative evaluation if written by Professor C but not if written by Professor D.) Thus, as in the case of Quantity, cooperativeness with regard to Manner is speaker-relative, and judgements on the matter will depend on facts about the speaker's attitudes and intentions.

Similar points could be made with respect to the submaxims relating to orderliness and brevity. Many different styles of speaking and writing are acceptable (compare the styles of different novelists), and what counts as a violation of brevity and orderliness in one writer or speaker might be perfectly normal in another.

1.5 Context

Another premise in the Gricean calculation is a description of context of the utterance. Again, I shall argue that this cannot be given in a speaker-independent way. I want to focus specifically on the *linguistic* context — the topic and purpose of the wider communicative exchange to which the utterance being interpreted belongs. Identifying this is crucial for establishing whether the Cooperative Principle is being followed at the level of what is said or what is implicated. For example, the sentence 'Fred has excellent handwriting' implicates that Fred is a poor philosopher only if uttered in the context of a request for an assessment of Fred's philosophical abilities, and then only if it has a prominent position in the assessment (added at the end of a reference letter, following a long series of highly positive comments about Fred's philosophical abilities, it would not generate the implicature).

But how do we determine the context for an utterance? We cannot simply read it off from the words uttered. Consider the following exchange between Sally and Sarah, academics who have just listened to a talk by a colleague Phil:

(10) Sally: What did you think of Phil's talk?
Sarah: It was OK. By the way, did I tell you about the new air freshener I bought?

Is Sarah's second sentence part of her response to Sally's question or is she changing the subject? If it is part of her response, then it must be interpreted as carrying an implicature, to the effect that Phil's talk 'stank'. But if it is a new topic, then it can be taken literally. It is hard to see how to decide without appealing to facts about Sarah and her intentions. We need to know whether she meant to change the subject with her second sentence, and to decide this we need to know more about what Sarah thinks of Phil and his philosophical views, how she reacted during his talk, whether she has a particular interest in air-freshening products, and so on. And this means that linguistic context cannot be determined in a speaker-independent way. Again, it might be suggested that we could treat all this information about Sarah as included within the context for the utterance, but,

again, this would preserve speaker-independence in name only. The nature of what was implicated would still vary from speaker to speaker.

2. Responding to the argument

I have reviewed all the premises for a Gricean calculation — the background constraints relative to which the implicated meaning is required — and argued that none of them can be established in a completely speaker-independent way. I will consider the consequences of this in a moment, but first I want to deal with a possible objection.

2.1 Resisting speaker dependency

Griceans might try to resist the argument for speaker-dependency by claiming that in the cases considered in the previous section the speakers' attempts at implicature simply fail. Because their utterances do not meet speaker-independent standards of interpretation, the speakers do not identify unambiguous implicata and thus either fail to implicate anything or implicate open-ended disjunctions. We are simply wrong to think that there are determinate implicatures in these cases. Our intuition that something specific is being implicated may correspond to an utterer-implicature or an audience-implicature, but there is no specific conversational implicature. This is counter-intuitive, but if the Gricean theory is a normative one, then we should expect that it will correct some of our everyday judgements.

I do not think this reply is satisfactory. First, it would mean that Saul's notions of utterer-implicature and audience-implicature will have a lot of theoretical work to do, and, as I shall argue in section 3 below, it is doubtful that they are up to the job. Second it means that Grice's theory becomes a radically revisionary one. Grice's aim was, I take it, to analyse the everyday phenomenon we have in mind when we talk of a speaker conveying something indirectly — implying, suggesting, indicating, or meaning one thing by saying another (Grice 1989, p.86). But on the view just proposed the Gricean notion of conversational implicature is very strict, and there will be many cases where the Gricean account of what, if anything, a speaker is implicating is very different from what we would naturally take them to be indirectly implying (suggesting, indicating, meaning). Where we detect a clear indirect meaning, Gricean theory often tells us we should see none

at all, or only a much weaker, disjunctive one. (In many cases, these disjunctive meanings would be *very* weak. For example, given different background assumptions, Ellie's reply in (3) could be interpreted as indicating either that Senator Bloggs did take the bribe or that he did not, so if the implicature is the disjunction of these alternative interpretations, then it is completely uninformative.) Thus, Gricean theory requires us to revise or abandon a wide range of everyday interpretations and replace them with ones that are far less rich and informative. It is hard to see what value such a normative theory has.

Finally, and most importantly, the objection misdescribes the problem. It is not that in the cases we considered in section 1, the utterances *failed to meet* speaker-independent standards. Rather, the cases showed that there *are no such standards*. There are no speaker-independent norms for establishing the correct premises to use in a Gricean calculation. In the case of background assumptions, we saw that truth cannot serve as the standard, and community-wide belief will not do either, since there is no speaker-independent way of identifying the relevant community. Similarly, in the case of cooperativeness and the associated maxims, there are no objective standards governing the amount of information required, the truth or probability of the content, the relevance to the topic, and the manner of expression. As we have seen, the same words may be judged cooperative when uttered by one speaker and uncooperative when uttered by another, and there is no clear speaker-independent standard to which we could appeal to correct these judgements. Similar points hold for linguistic context and explicit (directly communicated) content. These cannot simply be read off from the words used, and fixing them involves reference to the speaker's attitudes.

Griceans might respond that even if there are no speaker-independent standards for determining background constraints, it does not follow that all implicatures are speaker-dependent to any significant degree. First, *generalized* implicatures are not sensitive to context at all and so should not be speaker-dependent. Second, even in the case of particularized implicatures, it will often be obvious what the relevant background constraints are from the non-psychological context, without considering the attitudes of the particular speaker.

I do not think these points are very strong. I will consider generalized implicatures in the next chapter, where I will argue that these are more context-

sensitive than Griceans suppose. But note that even if speaker dependency holds only for particularized implicatures, this still involves giving up the idea that Gricean theory provides global speaker-independent norms of implicature that cover both particularized and generalized varieties. As for the second point, it is not clear that it is correct. Although it may frequently be obvious what the appropriate background constraints are, this may be because it is obvious what the relevant psychological attitudes of the speaker are (perhaps because they are widely shared in the speaker's community), rather than because these attitudes are not relevant. At any rate, the examples used to argue for speaker-dependency in section 1 were familiar, everyday ones, and many more could have easily been offered.

2.2 Consequences of speaker-dependency

Suppose we accept, then, that implicatures are not speaker-independent. Although the notion of *what is required* to make sense of an utterance as cooperative appears to offer a speaker-independent standard, it turns out that the background constraints relative to which an interpretation is required cannot themselves be identified without reference to the attitudes of the speaker. What are the consequences of this?

First, it weakens the normative role of the Gricean framework. As we have seen, the framework is best understood as aiming to establish conditions for implicature that are independent of the speaker's attitudes and intentions. If the arguments in section 1 above are sound, then it fails to do this. Although the framework still establishes conditions for the presence of an implicature, these conditions are not independent of the speaker. Facts about the speaker and their mental states are an essential part of the background for a Gricean calculation. The notion of what is required to make sense of an utterance as cooperative still provides a standard for implicature, but it is a speaker-dependent one. Quite different interpretations may be required to make sense of two utterances of the same sentence in the same context made by different speakers. This is a much weaker normative standard.

Second, if, as I argued, a speaker's intentions partially fix the background assumptions with respect to which utterances are to be interpreted, then speakers

can at least partially *control* what is required to make sense of their utterances as cooperative.[6] Consider an example from Davis. Carl says ‘I am sick’ and Diane replies ‘A flying saucer is nearby’ (Davis 1998, p.74). Although there is no single interpretation required to make sense of this bizarre comment, Davis claims that Diane may nonetheless be implicating something specific. For she may mean to convey a specific message — say that Carl can get help from the doctors on the flying saucer — and on Davis’s view for a speaker to implicate something is simply for them to mean to convey it by saying something else (where meaning to convey something is a matter of having appropriate communicative intentions) (Davis 1998, p.4–5, p.114, p.122, p.130, 2007, p.1661).[7] Saul objects that it is counter-intuitive to think that speakers possess such a degree of authority over what they implicate, and uses this intuition to support the normative reading of Grice we have been considering (Saul 2001, p.633; 2002, pp.240–1). However, if a speaker’s intentions determine which background assumptions to use in interpreting their utterances, then it might seem that Diane’s utterance could carry the implicature she intends, even on Gricean principles. Suppose Diane intends her utterance to be interpreted in the light of the following background assumptions: (a) Flying saucers are real and often visit Earth, (b) Flying saucers carry alien doctors, (c) Alien doctors are able and willing to cure human sickness. Then, given

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[6] Not all the background constraints that are speaker *dependent* are under speaker *control*, of course, since speakers may not have control over the relevant facts about themselves. For example, a speaker violates the maxim of Quality in saying that p only if they believe that p is false or have (what they regard as) inadequate evidence for p. These are facts about the speaker, but not ones over which the speaker has any direct control. But as we saw earlier, some background constraints, in particular background assumptions, are plausibly fixed by the speaker’s *intentions*, which are under their control.

[7] This is how Davis defines what he calls *speaker implicature*, which he identifies with Grice’s particularized implicature (Davis, 1998, p.21). Davis also argues for the existence of what he calls *sentence implicatures* (corresponding to Grice’s generalized implicatures), which depend on conventions of use within a language community. I shall discuss Davis’s views about sentence implicature in the next chapter.

this background, the supposition that Diane believes that Carl can get help on the spaceship *is* plausibly required to make sense of her utterance as cooperative.

This is too fast, however. Given Diane's intentions with regard to background assumptions, the supposition that she is expressing the belief that Carl can get help on the spaceship is required to make sense of her utterance as cooperative, so clause (2) of Grice's definition (= clause (I) of the revised definition) is met. But there is still clause (3) (= revised clause (II)) to consider. On the original version this says that the speaker believes that the audience can work out that the supposition in question is required.[8] But, as I argued in the previous chapter (section 3.2), this does not provide a strong normative constraint. Diane may believe, wrongly, that Carl shares her beliefs about flying saucers and alien doctors, and thus that he can work out that she is implicating that he can get help on the saucer. However, I proposed a revised version of this clause (II), to the effect that a typical audience can work out that the supposition in question is required — where a typical hearer is a competent potential addressee for the utterance in question (an alert, averagely informed, linguistically competent, member of the community to whom the speaker might address the utterance). Since speakers cannot control whether or not a typical audience can work out what

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[8] As a reminder, Grice's conditions (2) and (3) and my conditions (I) and (II) are as follows:

> (2) The supposition that [the speaker] 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.
>
> (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.
>
> (I) The supposition that the speaker is aware that, or thinks that, *q*, is required to make his saying or making as if to say *p* (or doing so in *those* terms) consistent with the presumption that he is observing the CP.
>
> (II) It would be within the competence of a typical audience to work out, or grasp intuitively, that the supposition mentioned in (I) is required.

supposition is required to make sense of their utterances as cooperative, this limits speakers' control over what they can implicate. A speaker may have intentions that dictate that a certain reading of their utterance is required to make sense of it as cooperative, but the speaker does not *implicate* that reading unless a typical audience can work out that it is required. Thus, depending on the details of the situation, Diane may or may not succeed in implicating what she intends. If she thinks, mistakenly, that everyone shares her eccentric views about flying saucers and alien doctors, then she will fail to implicate it. However, if she and Carl are members of a UFO cult who all share similar beliefs about flying saucers, and she takes this for granted in making her remark, then a typical hearer (in the specified sense) would be able to work out her intended meaning and she would succeed in implicating it. Thus, on this view there remains a significant constraint on speakers' power to implicate.

2.3 An intention-centred account of implicature

Is the normative element provided by clause (II) sufficient to save the Gricean framework? I don't think so — at least not in its traditional form. In fact, I think the moral of the discussion is that a theory of implicature can and should give a greater role to speaker intentions.

On the surface, the Gricean framework gives no role to speaker intentions in fixing what utterances implicate (though, as argued in the previous chapter, it may allow a role for intentions in determining what *speakers* implicate). But if the arguments above are correct, then there is a hidden indirect role for speaker intentions in fixing what utterances implicate, since implicatures are sensitive to facts about speakers' intentions with regard to the background constraints on interpretation (background assumptions, cooperative standards, and so on). But, once this is admitted, then the question arises of why speaker intentions should not play a greater role. Why not allow that speaker intentions can directly fix what is implicated, as Davis holds? This would immediately resolve many of the problem cases discussed in Chapter 3, where considerations of calculability could not determine whether or not a speaker was implicating something (as with Candy and the Tarantino movie) or provide a non-disjunctive account of what they were

implicating (as with Finn's Suleiman remark). For the speaker may have clear communicative intentions that settle the matter.

As noted, Saul rejects Davis's view on the grounds that it gives speakers too much power over the nonconventional content of their utterances — power they do not have over their utterances' conventional content. (Compare the Humpty Dumpty theory of implicature mentioned in Chapter 1.) As Saul puts it, 'What Grice's theory gives us and Davis' does not is the idea that what is implicated is not wholly up to the speaker' (Saul 2001, p.633). But, as we have seen, the notion of what is required (on Gricean principles) to make sense of an utterance as cooperative does not in itself provide a speaker-independent standard, since a speaker's intentions play a crucial role in the calculation, by establishing the relevant background assumptions, cooperative standards, and so on. The normative element comes in only with the requirement that a typical hearer can *work out* what is required. But a similar constraint could also be incorporated into an intention-based account like Davis's. We might say that a speaker S who says that p implicates that q if (a) S means to convey that q by saying p, and (b) a typical audience could work out that S means to convey that q. (Again, a typical audience is a competent potential addressee, where this might be someone with considerable background knowledge of S's attitudes.)[9]

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[9] It is arguable that a constraint similar to Grice's condition (3) is actually implicit in an intention-based account of implicature — at least given a Gricean view of speaker meaning. According to Grice, for S to mean that q is (in essence) for S to intend to get their hearer to believe that q by recognizing S's intention to get them to do so. But one cannot seriously intend to do something unless one believes one has at least a chance of success. We cannot seriously intend to do things we think are impossible. So if S intends to get their hearer H to recognize their intention to communicate q, then S must at the very least think it is possible for H to recognize it, and thus that it must be possible for H to see the connection between what they say and what they are trying to implicate. Davis himself stresses this point:

> On my view, S means or implies I by uttering Σ only if S utters Σ with the intention of providing an indication that he believes I … Because intention implies expectation, S must have some expectation that uttering Σ will provide

Thus we can avoid the Humpty Dumpty theory. Even if speakers' intentions can directly fix what they implicate, speakers cannot implicate whatever they like. They must ensure that they make their communicative intentions clear. Borrowing a term from Saul, we might say that they must *make* their intended meaning *available* to their audience. They might do this in various ways. They *could* rely on Gricean mechanisms. If the meaning they intend to convey is the one that is obviously required (given the relevant background constraints) to make sense of their utterance as cooperative, then they have made it available. But this is not the only means they might use. They might indicate their intended meaning by tone of voice, expression, gestures, and other non-verbal cues. They might rely on their hearer's knowledge of their beliefs, intentions, preferences, dispositions, and conversational habits. (Remember that a typical audience in our sense may be one that is well acquainted with the speaker.) They might know that they have a rapport with the hearer, which enables him or her to pick up their communicative intentions intuitively from numerous subtle cues. They might, at the extreme, simply *tell* the hearer what they mean. Or they might rely on a combination of these and other means.[10]

On this view, then, the core normative constraint on speakers is that they make their intended meaning available *by some means*. The Gricean framework is just one particular account of how a content might be made available, and calculability is no longer a necessary condition for implicature.[11] It is true that this move makes

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> an indication that he believes I. Unless S is psychotic, S will have such an expectation only if S perceives some connection in the context of utterance between I and the proposition E literally expressed by Σ. (Davis, 1998, p.186)

[10] They might also, perhaps, rely on the hearer's knowledge of specific interpretative principles or implicature conventions, which support generalized implicatures. I will discuss this in the next chapter.

[11] Compare Davis:

> [A] speaker can make her implicature available if she creates a context in which there is enough evidence available to her conversational partners to give them a reasonable chance of figuring out what she has implied on the basis of what she

our account of implicature more vague, but, arguably, this reflects the open-ended nature of the phenomenon itself. Implicature-based communication is complex and subtle and cannot be captured in a precise definition, even one as clever as Grice's. (I shall suggest in Chapter 6 that the difficulty we have in providing a precise theory of implicature tells us something about the social function of implicature.)

I think this is on the right lines, but I want to make an important modification. Above, I said that a speaker S implicates that q by saying that p if (a) S means to convey that q by saying that p, and (b) a typical hearer could work out that S means to convey that q. However, this formulation states conditions for the *speaker* to implicate and does not allow for the possibility (discussed in Chapter 3, section 3.3) that an *utterance* may implicate something that the speaker does not mean. (I offered the example of Rita, who, in her eagerness to say what a wonderful human being Omar was, forgot to mention his philosophical abilities and thereby implicated that he was a poor philosopher.) If we are to allow for unmeant implicatures, we need to make a distinction between what a speaker implicates and what their utterance implicates, and the latter must thus be independent of (or at least not wholly determined by) the former. As we saw in the previous chapter, with the modifications I proposed, the Gricean framework can allow for this: We can say that an utterance U implicates that q if the supposition that the speaker thinks that q is required to make sense of U as cooperative, and that a speaker S implicates that q if S means that q and produces an utterance that implicates that q. If we want to make a similar distinction on our intention-centred account, then we cannot say that what an utterance implicates is fixed by what the speaker means to convey (even if what they themselves implicate is fixed by that).

> said. Knowledge that speakers generally observe the Cooperative Principle and the maxims may be part of this evidence. But that knowledge may be overridden … Moreover, the evidential base may be completely different. (Davis, 2007, 1668–9)

For more on the range of factors that may be involved in the recognition of an implicature, see Davis 1998, pp.127–31.

I think we can do this, by appealing again to the notion of *making a meaning available*. Let us say that an utterance U *makes q available* (where q is not the literal meaning of U) if a typical audience (in our sense) would identify q as the (or a)[12] intended meaning of U, inferring this from the literal meaning of U, together with any or all of the indications mentioned earlier (Gricean considerations, non-verbal cues, knowledge of the speaker's attitudes and habits, personal rapport, and so on).[13] Then we can say that an utterance implicates q if it makes q available in this way. In short, what an utterance implicates is what a typical hearer (in our sense) would *judge* the speaker to mean to convey by saying what they do, where this may differ from what the speaker actually meant to convey by saying it. The implicated meaning is the non-literal meaning the speaker *appears* to intend.[14]

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[12] I say 'or a' since the hearer may also regard the utterance's literal meaning as an intended meaning of the utterance.

[13] This definition of making available is restricted to non-literal meanings. We might also speak of utterances making literal meanings available: A literal meaning is made available if a typical audience would interpret it as the speaker's intended meaning. If we do this, then it will of course be crucial to distinguish the indirect making available involved in implicature from the direct making available involved in literal communication. It might seem that we can do this by saying that implicature-carrying utterances make their implicated meanings available by making their literal meanings available. However, if 'made available' means 'would be interpreted as intended', then this will not do, since the literal meaning of an implicature-carrying utterance would often *not* be interpreted as intended, as in cases of irony. It would be better to say that an implicature-carrying utterance makes its implicated meaning available by *having* another meaning, which itself may or may not be made available. In the text, 'made available' should always be understood in this way, to mean made available *via another meaning*.

[14] In a fuller treatment, this might need some refinement. For example, we might want to allow for cases where a hearer judges that an utterance implicates something while at the same time realizing that the speaker does not really intend to convey it. (In the Rita example, Donald might realize that Rita's admiration for Omar's general goodness has led her to misjudge the content of her reference.) Many such cases will be ones where the speaker is not paying full attention to what they are saying, so one option would be to say that what an utterance implicates is what a typical

On this view, then, the speaker's communicative intentions are central to what an utterance implicates, since evidence about them will affect how a typical hearer would interpret the utterance. (On the Gricean view, by contrast, such evidence is irrelevant.) However, if that evidence is misleading (if the speaker has given misleading indications of their meaning), then the meaning their utterance makes available, and thus implicates, may differ from what the speaker meant to convey. (In Saul's Roland case, for example, the professor's letter implicated that Roland was a poor student since it gave clear indications that that was what the writer meant to convey, even though she did not in fact want its readers to form that belief.) Similarly, if the speaker fails to give adequate indication of their intended meaning, then their utterance may fail to make any (non-literal) content available and thus fail to implicate anything at all. Thus, we can say that an *utterance* implicates that q if it makes q available, in the sense just described, and that a *speaker* implicates that q if they mean that q *and* produce an utterance that implicates that q.

To sum up, then, on our intention-centred account (conversational) implicature can be defined as follows:

> In saying that p, a speaker S implicates that q if (a) S means to convey that q by saying that p, and (b) S's utterance makes q available (in the sense defined earlier, relative to a typical audience).[15]

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hearer would judge the speaker to intend to convey if they thought the speaker was being fully attentive.

[15] Davis suggests a similar account. Responding to Saul's objections, he stresses that his notion of (speaker) implicature is a purely descriptive one, and that we may also need a normative notion, *proper implicature*. On Davis's view, a person implicates that q if they mean or imply q by saying something else, but they properly implicate that q only if they also fulfil their communicative responsibilities by making their meaning available to their audience (Davis 2007, pp.1662–3).

This preserves the parallel between saying and implicating, both of which involve a psychological condition and a normative condition, as set out in the table below (a revised version of Table 1, updated to reflect our intention-centred definition).

	Act	**Psychological condition**	**Normative Condition**
Conventional meaning	S says that p	S means that p (speaker meaning)	S uses a sentence that means p (sentence meaning)
Nonconventional meaning	S implicates that q	S means that q (speaker implicature)	S produces an utterance that makes q available (utterance implicature)

Table 2: Saying and implicating according to the intention-centred account of conversational implicature.

I want to emphasize that, although this account retains a normative component and allows for unmeant implicatures, it does not establish *speaker-independent* norms of implicature. As I explained, in interpreting an utterance a typical hearer may draw on information about the particular speaker (their beliefs, conversational habits, and so on), and such information may therefore determine what the utterance makes available, and so implicates (which may, however, be different from what the speaker actually meant). Thus, the same sentence may generate different implicatures in the same context when uttered by different speakers. The account is, we might say, only *weakly* normative. Given the problems raised earlier in this chapter, I doubt that it is possible to provide speaker-independent norms of implicature, at least for particularized implicatures.

This is only a sketch of the intention-centred account, and further refinements and additions might be needed in order to develop it fully. But I hope I have said enough to show that it is possible to develop an intention-centred account of implicature which drops the requirement for calculability in Grice's sense but does not ignore normative concerns.

3. Utterer-implicature and audience-implicature

Before moving on, I want to return to an issue that I set aside earlier. As part of her case for a normative reading of Grice, Saul introduced the notions of *utterer-implicature* and *audience-implicature*. These are psychological states, and the purpose of positing them was, as it were, to fill in the gaps left by Grice's account. Many apparent cases of implicature turn out not to meet the strict Gricean conditions for implicature (given the argument in section 1, there may be a very large number of such cases). But — the suggestion was — rather than see this as evidence against Grice, we could see it as evidence for the existence of distinct psychological phenomena related to implicature. In cases of apparent implicature, Griceans may say, there is not an implicature, but the speaker or hearer *thinks* there is one. In this way, Griceans might use the notions of utterer-implicature and audience-implicature to respond to the challenge of speaker-dependency. I said earlier that I did not think this tactic would work, and I shall now explain why.

To recap, here is how Saul defines the two notions:

> *Utterer-implicature*:
>
> (1*) The speaker thinks that he is presumed to be following the conversational maxims, or at least the Cooperative Principle.
>
> (2*) The speaker thinks that the supposition that he is aware that, or thinks that, *q*, is required to make his saying or making as if to say *p* (or doing so in *those* terms) consistent with this presumption.
>
> (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.
>
> *Audience-implicature*:
>
> (1) The speaker is presumed to be following the conversational maxims, or at least the Cooperative Principle;
>
> (2A) The audience believes that the supposition that [the speaker] is aware that, or thinks that, *q*, is required to make his saying or making as if to say *p* (or doing so in *those* terms) consistent with this presumption.

> (3A) The audience takes the speaker to think that it is within the audience's competence to work out that the supposition mentioned in (2A) is required.
>
> (Adapted with minor revisions from Saul 2002a, p.235, 237, 242)

More concisely, there is an utterer-implicature when the speaker/utterer believes that each of the three conditions for a Gricean conversational implicature is met, and there is an audience-implicature when the hearer/audience thinks each of the three conditions is met.

Now, as theorists we have appealed to these notions mainly in cases where there is not in fact a conversational implicature. However, it cannot be supposed that utterer-implicatures and audience-implicatures exist only in cases where conversational implicature fails. It would be crazy to think that people believe that the Gricean conditions are met only when they are not met! Indeed, it is plausible to think that (on the Grice-Saul view) there will typically be an utterer-implicature whenever there is successful implicature generation, and that there will typically be an audience-implicature whenever there is successful implicature recovery. Cases where a person tries and fails to implicate something are subjectively just like cases where they try and succeed (assuming they do not realize they have failed), and cases where a hearer mistakenly thinks an implicature is present are subjectively just like cases where they correctly think one is (again, assuming they do not realize their mistake). So the same range of psychological states will, typically, be present in both cases. Thus, if utterer-implicatures are typically present in cases of failed implicature generation, then they will typically be present in cases of successful implicature generation too, and if audience-implicatures are typically present in cases of failed implicature recovery, then they will typically be present in cases of successful implicature recovery too.

Of course, even on the Grice-Saul view there will not *always* be an accompanying utterer-implicature and audience-implicature whenever there is a conversational implicature. As we saw in Chapter 3, a speaker may generate an implicature without believing that their audience will detect it (the Roland case), or (at least on my revised definition) without even realizing that they have done so

(the Rita case), so there can be conversational implicature without utterer-implicature. And there can be conversational implicatures that the audience does not recognize as having been intended (the Trigby case) or that they simply do not detect at all (the Wesley case), so there can be conversational implicature without audience-implicature.[16] These are, however, atypical cases, where the generation of the implicature is partially or wholly unintentional, or the recovery of the implicature partially or wholly unsuccessful. But when a speaker successfully implicates something in the normal way, there will be an utterer-implicature present, and when a hearer successfully detects an implicature there will be an audience-implicature too. Or, at least, that is a consequence of the Grice-Saul view. There are several problems with this position, however.

First, it re-introduces many of the problems for the Gricean framework that we considered in the previous chapter. The problems arose because the original definition imposed psychological conditions for implicature. Condition (1) ('the cooperative presumption') required that the hearer should think the speaker is being cooperative, and condition (3) ('mutual knowledge') required that the speaker should believe that the hearer can work out that the implicated proposition is required by Gricean principles. And these conditions, we saw, are implausible. Contra (1), speakers can implicate things when thought to be uncooperative (as when they change the subject or try to mislead) or when there is no hearer at all. And contra (3), people unfamiliar with Gricean theory can implicate things even though they do not believe that the implicated meanings are required on Gricean principles, and people can implicate things they do not believe their audience can grasp (for example, when talking to a coma patient). The normative view, under the revisions suggested, resolved these problems by *depsychologizing* the notion of implicature. The new conditions, (I) and (II),[17] did not mention the beliefs of the

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16 For the Roland, Trigby and Wesley cases, see Chapter 3, section 2.1; for the Rita case, see Chapter 3, section 3.3.

17 Again, as a reminder, these are conditions are:

actual speaker or hearer, but stipulated only that the implicated meaning should be rationally required to make the speaker's utterance consistent with the cooperative presumption (regardless of whether anyone had actually made that presumption), and that a typical hearer could work out that it was required (regardless of whether the actual hearer did so, or whether the speaker thought they could do so). This removed the problems at a stroke.

But the notion of utterer-implicature and audience-implicature are couched in psychological terms, and thus reintroduce those problems, or related versions of them. For utterer-implicature, (1*) is no more plausible than (1).[18] If speakers can successfully implicate things when their hearer does not presume they are being cooperative or when they have no hearer, then it is hard to see why they cannot successfully implicate things when they *doubt* or *disbelieve* that their hearer presumes them to be being cooperative, or *know* they have no hearer. And, since the definition of utterer-implicature includes Grice's original (3), it inherits all the problems arising from that clause.

Similarly, audience-implicature retains Grice's (1), and inherits all of the problems arising from it. And (2A) and (3A) raise an acute version of the problem of non-Griceans. These clauses require, not only that anyone who successfully recovers an implicature should believe that the implicated proposition is required by Gricean principles, but also that they should have complex higher-order beliefs — beliefs about the speaker's beliefs about their (the hearer's) mental abilities. And this requires, not only a knowledge of, and belief in, Gricean theory, but also

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> (I) The supposition that the speaker is aware that, or thinks that, *q*, is required to make his saying or making as if to say *p* (or doing so in *those* terms) consistent with the presumption that he is observing the CP.
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> (II) It would be within the competence of a typical audience to work out, or grasp intuitively, that the supposition mentioned in (I) is required.

18 Saul's (1*) (which is Grice's (1) prefixed with the 'The speaker thinks that') runs as follows:

> (1*) The speaker thinks that he is presumed to be following the conversational maxims, or at least the Cooperative Principle. (Saul 2002a, p.235)

a high level of conceptual sophistication. It seems highly unlikely that laypeople, non-Griceans, and children would form the beliefs mentioned; yet they are all capable of successfully recovering implicatures. When I tell my five-year old son that he may have some of the sweets, he understands that he may not have all of them. But, even as a proud mother, I find it highly improbable to suppose that he believes that I believe it is within his power to work out that the supposition that he may not eat all the sweets is required to make my saying that he may eat some of them consistent with the presumption that I am following the principles of cooperative communication.

We could reduce the problems here somewhat by remodelling the definitions of utterance-implicature and audience-implicature around the revised definition of conversational implicature proposed in the previous chapter, which omits the troublesome (and unnecessary) condition (1). Thus, the revised definition of utterer-implicature would be as follows:

> (I*) The speaker believes that the supposition that the speaker is aware that, or thinks that, *q*, is required to make his saying or making as if to say *p* (or doing so in *those* terms) consistent with the presumption that he is observing the CP.
>
> (II*) The speaker believes that it would be within the competence of a typical audience to work out, or grasp intuitively, that the supposition mentioned in (I*) is required.

The definition for audience-implicature would be derived by substituting 'The audience' for 'The speaker' in the first clause, and inserting 'The audience believes that' at the beginning of the second, giving (IA) and (IIA).

But although this removes the problems arising from clause (1), all of these stemming from (3) remain, transferred to clauses (II*) and (IIA). If successful implicature generation and implicature recovery presuppose the existence of utterer-implicatures and audience-implicatures, then those who do not or cannot understand the Gricean theory, or who reject it, or who have trouble forming higher-order beliefs, cannot generate or recover implicatures.

A second problem with the notions of utterer-implicature and audience-implicature is that there do not appear to be any independent reasons to posit these states in order to account for the psychology of implicature — and it is, in fact, rather implausible to do so. As I argued in the previous chapter, the parallel with *saying* suggests that the psychological condition for implicature should be simply that the speaker means that q (that is, has the right communicative intentions). On Grice's view, in order to say that p, a speaker must use a sentence with the right conventional meaning (the normative condition), and they must mean that p (the psychological condition). They need not also *believe* that the sentence they use has the right conventional meaning, and still less that the conditions spelled out in the Gricean analysis of conventional meaning hold. Given this, it is hard to see why a similar condition should be imposed on implicature. By contrast, as we saw in Chapter 2, there are reasons for thinking that Grice held that a speaker does need to mean that q in order for them to implicate it (though not for their *utterance* to implicate it).

Similarly, when a hearer recovers an implicature with content q, there seems no reason to think that they must believe that the supposition that the speaker is implicating q is required on Gricean principles. Grice allows that implicatures may be intuitively grasped — that is, the hearer may realize that they must suppose that the speaker thinks that q (and hence is implicating q) without explicitly reflecting on the grounds for this supposition. This seems right. We do not consciously engage in Gricean reflections when interpreting implicatures, and indeed we may grasp an implicated meaning without even realizing that it *is* an implicature. This is compatible with the Gricean account giving a correct account of the normative conditions for implicature. We can be sensitive to norms without having explicit beliefs about them and without explicitly calculating when and how they apply. A driver can follow the rules of the road without thinking about them and without even being able to state them clearly. Of course, it could be that in such cases the rules are known and applied at a nonconscious level, and the same might be true of Gricean principles. As we shall see in section 4 below, Grice may in fact be committed to this view. But, as we shall also see, there are problems for that view.

Given this, it is doubtful that implicature generation typically involves the existence of utterer-implicatures and that implicature recovery typically involves

the existence of audience-implicatures, as the Grice-Saul view supposes. And if they do not, then we cannot rely on an appeal to utterer-implicatures and audience-implicatures to account for our intuitions in cases where implicature generation or recovery is not successful. If utterer-implicatures and audience-implicatures do not routinely accompany conversational implicatures, then we cannot appeal to them to account for our intuitions in cases where the conditions for conversational implicature are not met but we still feel there is something implicature-like occurring.

Note that this is not to deny that we may need notions *similar to* those of utterer-implicature and audience-implicature. In fact, I think we do, but they should be weaker and less closely tied to Gricean theory. At a first attempt, we might say that an utterance U carries a *weak utterer-implicature* with content q if the speaker intends U to indirectly convey (imply, suggest, indicate, mean) that q. And we might say that U carries a *weak audience-implicature* if the hearer believes that U indirectly conveys that q or that the speaker is indirectly conveying q via U. These notions are much less theoretically loaded than the original ones, and it is not implausible to claim that they typically accompany attempts at implicature generation and recovery, both successful and unsuccessful. So they may be useful in characterizing the psychology of implicature. However, since they are not linked to a Gricean approach (they are compatible with any account of the precise conditions required for implicature), they offer no specific support for the Gricean framework.

4. Implicature recovery

We have been concerned so far with implicature *generation* — the analysis of the conditions necessary for an implicature to exist, which is the heart of the Gricean framework. I have argued that Grice's theory is best interpreted as a normative one, but that even on this interpretation it still faces serious problems, and that an alternative, intention-centred account is preferable. I turn now to look at the Gricean framework's implications for implicature recovery — the psychological process by which hearers detect implicatures and recover their content. Again, I shall argue that there are problems for the Gricean approach.

As noted in Chapter 1, a theory of implicature generation will have implications for a theory of implicature recovery. We can recover conversational implicatures with some reliability, and we must, therefore, have some means of detecting the existence of the conditions that generate them. Broadly speaking, if an implicature exists in virtue of a certain state of affairs, S, then recovering the implicature will involve detecting S — either by directly detecting S itself or by detecting some state of affairs that reliably co-varies with S. For example, if implicatures are determined by the speaker's communicative intentions, then detecting an implicature must involve detecting those intentions. Assuming we can in fact recover implicatures (not infallibly, of course, but with some reliability), this means that a theory of implicature generation cannot completely ignore psychological questions about implicature recovery, and we can rule out theories on which we would not be able to reliably recover implicatures. Conversely, theories of how implicatures are recovered imply something about how implicatures are generated. If hearers typically detect implicatures by paying attention to a certain property of the communicative situation, then that property must be at least reliably connected with the property that generates the implicature. More fundamentally, the need for implicatures to be recoverable places some general constraints on a theory of implicature generation.

This is not to deny that a theory of implicature generation may play a normative role and may sometimes correct our judgements about what an utterance implicates. But the theory should not come totally apart from our everyday judgements. If the aim is to systematize the principles implicit in our best judgements about implicature, then it should be compatible with the nature of those judgements. If a normative theory says that implicature is determined by feature X, but our psychological theory tells us that our best judgements about implicature actually track feature Y, then the appropriate response, I suggest, would be to revise the normative theory.

Now on Grice's view, for an utterance U to implicate q there must exist a certain rational relation between certain premises (concerning U, its context, general conversational principles, and background assumptions), and the supposition that the speaker believes that q, to the effect that the former entail the latter or make it probable. So recovering the implicature must involve detecting

that this relation holds. Now Grice sketches an inferential process by which the existence of this relation could be established ('He has said that p; there is no reason to suppose that he is not observing the maxims …'), However, he adds that hearers need not actually go through this process and may simply 'grasp intuitively' (1975/1989, p.31) that the relation holds. This is important for the plausibility of Grice's position, since as hearers we do not typically, if ever, go through Gricean calculations, at least consciously. However, the reference to intuition does not offer an alternative explanation of how implicatures could be recovered. As Daniel Dennett remarks, 'Intuition, after all, is not a particular method of deduction or induction; to speak of intuition is to deny that one knows how one arrived at the answer' (Dennett 1986, p.152). Nor will it do to appeal to the competence view, discussed in Chapter 2, on which a quick, gappy inferential process can be regarded as valid, provided the reasoner intends it to be valid and has the ability the produce a full version filling in all the gaps (Chapter 2, section 3). This may be sufficient for the reference to intuition in clause (3) of Grice's definition of implicature, where it is the responsibilities of the speaker that are at issue ('the speaker thinks … that it is within the competence of the hearer to work out, or intuitively grasp, that the supposition mentioned in (2) is required'). But it will not do here, where the question is not whether an intuitive inference could be replaced by an explicit version, but *how* an intuitive process actually got to the answer. Implicature recovery is not magic, so there must be some reliable mechanism at work, at a nonconscious level if not at a conscious one. But what could it be? There seem to be only two options for Grice. First, the mechanism could involve a *nonconscious* Gricean calculation. Second, it could involve a shortcut — the detection of some state of affairs that usually occurs when and only when the implicature-generating relation holds.

Take the second option first. This might work for generalized implicatures, which are not context dependent. If the same sentence generates the same implicature in most contexts, then we could reliably recover the implicature simply by detecting the use of the sentence. But this method would not work for particularized implicatures, which are heavily context-dependent and one-off. There are no repeatable associations here to pick up on and it is hard to see what other feature might offer a shortcut in such cases. It would need to be a feature

which is as context-sensitive as the implicature-determining relation itself. The only option seems to be speaker intentions. If there is a reliable link between what speakers intend to implicate and what their utterances actually do implicate on Gricean principles, and if hearers can reliably detect speaker intentions, then this would work. However, it is doubtful that there is a reliable — or reliable *enough* — link between speaker intentions and Gricean conversational implicatures. As we have seen, there will be many cases where what speakers intend to implicate differs from what their utterances do implicate, on Gricean principles. If it is speaker intentions that guide our everyday judgements in such cases, then it looks as if Gricean theory is not describing the everyday phenomenon of implicature at all, and that an intention-centred theory would be preferable.

If this is right, then Griceans should take the first option and hold that implicature recovery involves nonconscious Gricean calculations — at least in cases of particularized implicature. It is generally accepted by psychologists that complex nonconscious mental processes support everyday behaviour, so this is not in principle an implausible claim. However, there are specific problems in positing nonconscious Gricean calculations.

First, we run up against the problem of laypeople, non-Griceans, and children again. How do those who have not mastered, or have rejected, the Gricean framework recover implicatures? The only option seems to be to suppose that such people are in fact nonconscious Griceans — that although they have no explicit, conscious knowledge of, or acceptance of, the Gricean framework, the nonconscious mental processes that enable them to recover implicatures nevertheless employ Gricean concepts and principles. (It might even be suggested that these concepts and principles are innate.) The idea that nonconscious processing employs concepts and principles to which the person has no conscious access, and which may even conflict with their conscious beliefs, is not uncommon in cognitive science. Moreover, as we shall see in the next chapter, some linguists propose that the recovery of generalized implicatures involves the nonconscious application of simplified Gricean principles. However (as we shall see), the current experimental evidence does not favour this view, and to maintain that all implicatures are recovered by means of nonconscious Gricean calculations would be to make a strong and risky empirical commitment.

Second, there are worries about the feasibility of Gricean calculations, at least for particularized implicatures. As we saw in Chapter 2 (section 3), it is unlikely that Gricean calculations can be formulated as deductive inferences. Grice's own sketch of an implicature calculation is not deductively valid, and many additional premises would have to be added to make it so. It is more plausible to see the calculation as an abductive inference, or an inference to the best explanation — a process central to everyday and scientific reasoning. However, the sort of abductive inference involved in a Gricean calculation is an unusual one. The task is not to find the best explanation of an event — the speaker's making the utterance. If it were, then the best explanation would surely be that the speaker intended to convey something, and in hypothesizing about what this was, the hearer would naturally be guided by evidence about the speaker's beliefs, desires, and other mental states. But the task for the Gricean interpreter is different. What they must find is not an explanation of the speaker's utterance, but a way of reconciling two claims: that the speaker said what they did and that the speaker was being a cooperative communicator, and the data they are supposed to draw on excludes information about the speaker and their mental states. Given that there are, in principle, a limitless number of ways of making any two claims compatible, this could be a very demanding task, and a lot of background assumptions would have to be made in order to home in on a specific, non-disjunctive claim. It is hard to see why hearers should follow this route, especially when the more straightforward option of theorizing directly about the speaker's intentions is available.

Note finally that a closely related problem arises for speakers. If speakers are to non-accidentally succeed in implicating, then they will need to be sensitive to the implicature-generating relations between literal and implicated contents, so that they can choose suitable literal contents to convey the meanings they wish to implicate. And again we can ask how they achieve this sensitivity. In the case of generalized implicatures, they might rely on learned associations between sentences and implicatures, but in particularized cases, this option is not available. Since speakers cannot rely on hearers simply detecting their communicative intentions (which are, after all, irrelevant to implicature generation within the Gricean framework), it seems they will have to calculate the implicature-

generating relation, at least nonconsciously. That is, if they want to implicate q they will have to make a sort of reverse Gricean calculation, working out what they should say in order to make it the case that the supposition that they believe q is required in order to reconcile the claim that they said what they did with the claim that they are being a cooperative communicator. Again, this is a strong, and implausible, psychological hypothesis.

Conclusion

The previous chapter argued that many problems for the Gricean framework can be removed by following Saul in adopting a normative reading of Grice and by revising and extending the framework in sympathetic ways. This chapter has argued, however, that serious problems remain, especially as regards particularized implicatures. The revised Gricean framework does not achieve its aim of establishing speaker-independent norms for implicature, and it has some implausible implications for the psychology of implicature. One moral that emerged was that theories of implicature, whether concerned with generation or recovery, should give a greater role to speaker intentions, and I proposed an account of implicature that gave speaker intentions such a role while still retaining a normative element.

However, we have not finished with Gricean ideas yet. Some linguists have drawn on Grice's work in developing theories of implicature recovery, especially for generalized implicatures. (As we shall see, these accounts also have implications for implicature generation.) We shall consider this *neo-Gricean* approach in the next chapter. This will also give us chance to take a deeper look at the Gricean approach to generalized implicature.