

GRICEAN RATIONAL RECONSTRUCTIONS AND THE  
SEMANTICS/PRAGMATICS DISTINCTION\*

**ABSTRACT.** This paper discusses the proper taxonomy of the semantics-pragmatics divide. Debates about taxonomy are not always pointless. In interesting cases taxonomic proposals involve theoretical assumptions about the studied field, which might be judged correct or incorrect. Here I want to contrast an approach to the semantics-pragmatics dichotomy, motivated by a broadly Gricean perspective I take to be correct, with a contemporary version of an opposing “Wittgensteinian” view. I will focus mostly on a well-known example: the treatment of referential uses of descriptions and descriptive uses of indexicals. The paper is structured as follows. I will start by characterizing in the first section the version of the Gricean approach I favor; in the second section, I will illustrate the differences between the two views by focussing on the example, and in the third section I will object to what I take to be the main Wittgensteinian consideration.

1. A GRICEAN ACCOUNT OF THE SEMANTICS/PRAGMATICS  
DISTINCTION

The form of the Gricean view I wish to defend makes the following main claims about semantics. (1) Semantic facts are facts establishing what expressions conventionally or literally mean in a given public language. In the focal case of utterances, conventional meaning consists in what the utterance says, which in turn is to be analyzed in a type of illocutionary force and a truth-condition, and what the utterance conventionally presupposes – in Grice’s terms, its conventional implicatures. (2) Semantic facts about utterances are determined by semantic facts about their parts and about syntactic features they instantiate. (3) Semantic facts, about both utterances and their compositional structure, are determined by facts about a form of rational activity whose constitutive goals are those captured in Gricean explications of speaker-meaning. This is why utterances are the focal case, and also why their linguistic meanings decompose in the three-fold way indicated in (1).

We can put these three Gricean claims about semantics in terms of Lewis’ (1975) distinction between possible languages and the actual language used by a population, and what in the same work Lewis calls a *grammar*: a compositional account of what is meant by utterances on the



basis of semantic properties of words and semantic properties of syntactic features. Possible languages are stipulated to be functions assigning possible conventional meanings to possible utterances. Then, the preceding points come to the following contentions. Conventional regularities involving the use of words and syntactic features in utterances sufficiently determine (up to the measure of indeterminacy that is reasonable to expect in these matters) the language spoken by a population *and* its grammar. And utterances are the kind of rational activity explicated in Gricean accounts of speaker-meaning.

Let us say that the *L*-linguistic capacities of a speaker *S* of a used language *L* are those specifically constitutive of his knowledge of the semantic facts concerning *L*. Then, the Gricean view concerning pragmatic facts about a used language *L* is that these are facts establishing what speakers of *L*, in virtue of general rational abilities over and above their specifically *L*-linguistic abilities, are able to mean non-conventionally with expressions having semantic properties by exploiting those semantic properties. The Gricean insists that, in theoretically characterizing the semantics of used language *L*, it is important not to be misled by the merely pragmatic. Both are constitutively determined by a specific form of rational activity; what distinguishes them is the way in which they involve given conventional regularities.

The Gricean theoretical perspective has been described in a recent book on the philosophy of language as deservedly “often seen today as a degenerating research program” (Lance and O’Leary-Hawthorne 1997, 289). The fact that Schiffer, one of the philosophers who has made more important contributions to the program, has become one of its fiercest critics (see Schiffer 1987, ch. 9), lends some support to this claim.<sup>1</sup> However, in my view, none of the arguments on which either Schiffer or Lance and O’Leary-Hawthorne base their allegations should persuade us that the Gricean program is in fact degenerating. They only reflect an inaccurate way of conceiving the goals of the program – even if it is one that is widespread among defenders of the Gricean approach, conspicuously among them, Schiffer’s earlier self.

The version of the Gricean approach I have outlined is immune to the objections by writers like those just mentioned because it differs in three important respects from others. Firstly, it ascribes a more complicated form to the explicated concepts, than simple definitions, in terms of a set of jointly sufficient necessary conditions. Secondly, it does not provide a reduction of social to psychological properties. And thirdly, it is committed to ascribing compositional structure to linguistic meanings. I will briefly comment on these three points. The remarks which follow fall short

of providing the rational support that these controversial claims require. Nevertheless, I hope that they give the reader an indication of the line of thought I rely upon, without which, I fear, the kind of view I defend in the paper will not be taken seriously these days.

*The fundamental concepts are not to be explicated by stating a number of jointly sufficient necessary conditions.* The first difference with other Gricean accounts lies in seeing Gricean explications – including ancillary explications of *speaker-meaning* and of *convention* – as capturing ‘family resemblance’ conceptions: cluster concepts, whose weighted conditions of application jointly provide sufficient conditions for paradigm cases, but are only required to apply to the extent of their respective relative weights.

There are two different goals entwined in projects such as the Gricean one – projects aiming at providing a *rational reconstruction* or *explication* of a pre-existing notion – which must be kept separate. There is, firstly, a *descriptive* goal: we want to provide information about a real phenomenon (linguistic meaning, in our case); not, indeed, by imparting knowledge about it not previously possessed by anybody, but rather by presenting in an explicit form facts only tacitly or implicitly or, as I prefer to say for reasons given later (borrowing a useful term from a dubious source) *unthematizedly* known before.<sup>2</sup> And there is, secondly, a *normative* goal. Possessing a concept is, constitutively, something good, or valuable, in that it allows its possessor to attain certain goals (goals among those constitutive of rationality). Having a (correct) rational reconstruction of an unthematized concept should be better *with respect to those very goals* than merely having the latter. Having a rationally reconstructed concept of *X* is not better than merely having an unthematized concept of *X* for every possible goal; for instance, only the unthematized concept might allow the sort of quick thinking we need in ordinary life. But it should allow having more true beliefs and beliefs epistemically better justified about *X*, having intentions concerning *X* more capable of standing rational scrutiny, and so on.

When we take into consideration the normative goal, it is clear that fully precise explications providing necessary and sufficient conditions of application for the explicated notion are ideal. For those concepts whose unthematized forms are not that precise (for instance, in that they appear to be of a prototypical nature), however, this might involve a *prima facie* conflict with the descriptive goal. Now, to the extent that the relevant unthematized concepts are concepts of objective entities, and a realist attitude about the entities in question is required, the conflict, it seems to me, is merely apparent, as witnessed by, say, concepts of tigers. The unreconstructed concept which we ordinary people have is imprecise, be-

ing perhaps constituted by a prototype and a similarity rider; but nothing stands in the way of introducing, on the basis of empirical findings, a fully precise characterization of the so conceived entities, by giving necessary and sufficient conditions (a description of the shared genome perhaps). In my view, it is a mere prejudice to think that the same does not apply when we are dealing with thematized conceptions not empirically based, but proposed as *a priori* philosophical explications. The reason why it is a prejudice is not that there is no relevant distinction between a priori and a posteriori knowledge, or between analytic and synthetic truth.<sup>3</sup> But it is a prejudice nonetheless; in fact, this is, in a general form, the very prejudice which, in its specific application to conceptions of linguistic meaning, we will be discussing here.

I do not know of any good reason to think that linguistic meaning is a phenomenon any less objective than tigerhood, or regarding which we should adopt an attitude that is in any way less realist (although there are arguments to that effect by Davidson, followers of Wittgenstein and others). Chomsky has provided good reasons to think that the best characterizations to be given of an actual language will be based in part on empirical findings: data about acquisition and loss of linguistic competence, about computational processing, perhaps about the modular structure of the human brain, etc. Taking into account then, the normative aspect of the project of rational reconstruction, it was understandable that Grice, Schiffer and others attempted to provide fully precise definitions, in the form of jointly sufficient necessary conditions. The pattern of objections to the explications (including both objections to the sufficiency of the analyses, and to the necessity of some conditions) suggests, however, that the descriptive goals of the program can only be attained by conceiving the unthematized concepts as “family resemblance” ones, constituted by a cluster of weighted conditions, which only apply jointly to paradigm cases. This is compatible with our rational reconstructions being as precise as we could want them to be. (Although constructing them might well require taking decisions which cannot be justified on the basis of our clear intuitions about what we would count or would not count as cases of linguistic meaning, but only on more theoretically-driven considerations.<sup>4</sup>) It is only that the resulting explications cannot be as simple as they are usually assumed to be. Instead of a list of necessary conditions which are jointly sufficient, we should provide definitions of a series of related cases, starting by paradigm ones and continuing with cases which depart further and further from the prototype.

Although I will not go into the details here, I hope this will be enough for the reader to envisage how common objections to the necessity of the

conditions in Gricean explications of linguistic meaning, and the ancillary notions of speaker-meaning and convention, can be dealt with if this suggestion is adopted. Consider, as an example, an habitual objection to Lewis' (1975) definition of *convention*, which I take to be fundamentally on the right track as an explication of paradigm cases of conventions. With this view, conventions are regularities rationally "self-perpetuated" in that conformity and secured by the expectations of participants that others will conform to, given that they have certain goals. Lewis includes a clause to the effect that conventions are arbitrary, in that a different regularity could have served the same goals, and another clause stating that the clauses of the definition are known, and indeed commonly or mutually known, by participants. A usual objection (Burge 1975, 250; Laurence 1996, 277; Millikan 1998, 165–6) is based on regularities (like keeping a certain distance when talking to others, or even using a given language in some cases) which we would count as conventional, although participants in them do not know, still less know mutually, that they are arbitrary. This can be handled by acknowledging that the mutual knowledge condition captures only prototypical cases, but has only a relative small weight in determining the conventional nature of a regularity. The resulting view will still differ from the alternatives that are supported on the basis of examples like those, for instance, by the three writers I have mentioned. It will differ precisely regarding what I take to be the really distinctive Gricean point here, closely related to the main point at stake in the debate we will be examining: the claim that prototypical conventions are *rationally* self-perpetuating regularities in behavior.<sup>5</sup>

*The appeal to speaker-meaning, although essential and explanatory, does not provide a reduction of the social to the psychological.* The second difference between the present Gricean account and others lies in its abandoning of any reductionist ambitions. The conceptual priority assigned in Gricean views to speaker-meaning is not seen here as furthering a reduction of the social to the psychological (and perhaps ultimately to the non-intentional). The point of claiming that conventional acts of meaning are also acts of speaker-meaning is to say that they are not *merely* natural occurrences, but rather natural occurrences constituting the sort of rational act captured in Gricean explications of speaker-meaning. There is no further claim that, in giving a rational reconstruction of the act of meaning made by the literal speaker, we can avoid referring in any way to the conventions constituting the public language the speaker takes himself to speak. In fact, I believe this cannot be avoided.

What is definitely *Gricean* about the Gricean explication of literal meaning is the appeal in the explication to a conceptually prior notion of

speaker-meaning. Now, some writers interpret this conceptual priority of speaker-meaning in the following reductionist way. Pre-theoretically, the concept of expression-meaning is *social* in that it involves claims containing quantification over (or reference to) distinctively social entities, such as conventional regularities in the behavior of the members of a community *C*. It thus involves a *prima facie* ontological commitment to those social entities. The reductionist interpretation of the Gricean priority of speaker-meaning over expression-meaning is motivated by the hope of showing that the only ontological commitments which we in fact incur in applying a sensible concept of expression-meaning concern folk-psychological entities like believings and intendings. Griceans such as Schiffer (1972), Lewis (1975), Bennett (1976) and Loar (1981) are all reductionist in this sense; they all express the hope I have just mentioned.

Thus, Schiffer writes as follows: “It is essential to the programme of providing an account of the meaning of utterance-types in terms of a basic account of *S*-meaning that what *S* means by uttering *x* is not at all determined by what is uttered, i.e., by the value of ‘*x*’. [...] If the only difference between two utterances is that in one case *S* utters *x* and in the other *S* utters *y*, then what *S* means by uttering *x* is identical with what *S* means by uttering *y*. The importance of this condition is that if it were the case that what *S* meant by uttering *x* were determined, even in part, by the meaning of *x*, then this would, on the face of it, render circular an account of what *x* means in terms of what is or would be meant by uttering *x*” (Schiffer 1972, 64–5). As illustration, Schiffer argues that in uttering  $\sigma_1$  ‘The cat is on the mat’ a speaker would mean the same as in uttering  $\sigma_2$  ‘My primary intention in uttering this sentence is to produce in you – by means of recognition of intention – the belief that the cat is on the mat’ (which he takes to be synonymous with the explicit performative ‘I (hereby) tell you that the cat is on the mat’). I am not interested here in discussing Schiffer’s considerations on these particular examples, but in illustrating the consequences of adopting a reductionist attitude and in highlighting the differences regarding the view advanced here. I myself believe that, precisely because of the independent, conventional difference in meaning between the sentences uttered in  $\sigma_1$  and  $\sigma_2$ , any competent speaker will literally mean different propositions by those utterances; even though, in any ordinary speech situation, the speaker of  $\sigma_2$  conveys what the speaker of  $\sigma_1$  literally means.<sup>6</sup>

Consider typical examples of speaker-meaning produced to support the reductionist hope. In one of Borges’ short stories, “El jardín de los senderos que se bifurcan”, Yu Tsun, a German spy in England during the First World War, finds no better way of communicating to his superiors

in Berlin that the city they should bomb is Albert, than killing a man named 'Albert'. (Yu Tsun makes sure that the news of such an apparently unmotivated murder will be in newspapers read in Berlin.) This fits nicely with Grice's original explication of speaker-meaning: by "uttering" his murdering of Albert, Yu Tsun intends his superior to judge that the city to bomb is Albert precisely through the recognition of Yu Tsun's intention that he so judges. Now, it is certainly the case that Yu Tsun's "utterance" is not a conventional device for informing someone that Albert is the city that should be bombed. It certainly informs (assuming the usual Gricean explication of *informing S that p* that fits nicely this example), but it is not a conventional device for doing that.

However, attaining the goal of convincing us, on the basis of examples like this, that the reductionist hope stated three paragraphs back, can be realized, requires rather more than this. It requires convincing us that Yu-Tsun's communicative intentions "are not intrinsically convention-implicating" (Loar 1981, 244). And this is doubtful. It is doubtful, in other words, that what is involved in having intentions like Yu Tsun's could be explicated without commitment to the existence of linguistic conventions. The reductionist will accept that, as a matter of actual fact, to have intentions like those a rational being ought to have learnt the relevant concepts as a member of a linguistic community. He will insist, however, that there exists at least the conceptual possibility of having the relevant thoughts "in isolation". But I think there are serious reasons, ultimately Wittgensteinian in spirit, to doubt this. And not only with respect to cases involving relatively complex thoughts like those that Yu Tsun intends to cause in his audience. The point might well extend even to the thought that one has a headache.

The form of the Gricean view I want to invoke differs thus from others in that it rejects any reductionist ambitions. Acts of meaning are those which can be accounted for on the basis of the Gricean explication of speaker-meaning. The only sense in which they are not supposed to involve conventions is that they do not necessarily involve the use of a conventional device for conveying what is meant in them. Literal acts of meaning, on the other hand, are acts of meaning which do involve the use of conventional devices. Pragmatic acts of meaning, are acts in which a conventional device is used in such a way that, what would be meant by it if literally used, is not in fact, primarily meant by the speaker. What is Gricean in these proposals is that (i) literally meaning *M* entails meaning *M* – and thus performing a well-defined type of rational act – by means of a certain conventional device for that purpose, while (ii) meaning *M* does not entail having recourse to a conventional device for that purpose.<sup>7</sup>

The main drive behind this paper can be characterized as that of opposing two related forms of reductionism concerning linguistic meaning: the Cartesian-internalist, advocated by writers like Schiffer, Loar or Lewis, which aims to reduce linguistic meaning to a complicated set of folk-psychological mental states of an isolated individual, and the Chomskian-functionalist, illustrated by Schiffer's more recent self and by Laurence (1996), which would reduce linguistic meaning instead to functional-cum-physical internal states of such an isolated individual.<sup>8</sup> On the view propounded here, an actual language is an objective entity in itself, which cannot be reduced by definition to other things. A manifestation of this is that, in providing an explication of what it is that a literal speaker means when uttering a given sentence, we need to make uneliminable reference to the meaning of expressions in the (public) language he is using.

What of Schiffer's implied motivation for the Gricean to embrace reductionism, based on the alleged explanatory vacuity of any alternative account? How can a really *explanatory* reference to speaker-meaning be made in explicating linguistic meaning? An analogy might help us here. On the view of linguistic meaning I assume, the meaning of, say, 'ambulo' in Latin compositionally depends on the meaning of the verbal root 'ambul-' and the meaning of the lexeme '-o'. This is an application of some form of Frege's Principle of Compositionality; in these terms, we aim to explain the systematicity of linguistic meaning – the fact that a competent speaker who understands 'ambulo' understands other expressions also, like, say, 'ambulabat'. However, some form of Frege's Context Principle applies also to linguistic meaning; this is required by our non-reductionist appeal to speaker-meaning in the explication, for speaker-meaning is a property of whole utterances. A verbal root like 'ambul-', and lexemes like '-o' or '-abat', have only meaning in the context of a sentence; their linguistic meaning has to be explicated in terms of their contribution to the meaning of utterances made by means of the sentences they might contribute to form. Now, there appears to be a vicious circularity lurking here. If the meaning of 'ambul-' depends on the meaning of the sentences in which it might appear, thus on the meaning of the sentences it might contribute to form together with lexemes including '-abat', how can also be true that the meaning of 'ambulabat' depends on the meanings of 'ambul-' and that of '-abat'? How can we really have an explanation of the systematic ability to understand new sentences, like 'ambulabat', on the part of anybody competently understanding 'ambulo'? The ultimate worry here comes to this: explanation entails dependence, but is dependence not asymmetric?



The answer is that the articulation of our worry mixes up two different kinds of dependence. The meaning of sentences depends *specifically* on the meanings of each lexical unit and meaningful syntactic structure constituting it; it is determined by semantic properties of each particular one of them, and, as a result, to understand a sentence requires understanding of each significant component. The meaning of units like ‘ambul-’ depends *generically* on the meaning of the sentences it might contribute to form, thus on the meaning of lexemes like ‘-o’ and ‘-abat’. The meaning of ‘ambul-’, i.e., cannot be specified without mentioning the meaning of *some or other* lexeme like ‘-o’; but there is no particular lexeme whose meaning is to be mentioned in giving the meaning of ‘ambul-’. Two speakers might give the same meaning to the root, even though their respective theories consider for it its combination with different lexemes. Thus, we can properly explain how each of them understand new sentences: there is no circularity in appealing to the meaning of ‘ambul-’ when accounting for the meaning of ‘ambulabat’.

Similarly, on the view advanced here the literal meaning of an utterance is a form of speaker-meaning which depends *specifically* on the conventions of the public language on which the speaker’s communicative intentions rely. On the other hand, the conventions of any language depend *generically* on some or other acts of speaker-meaning performed by means of them. Linguistic expressions, in other words, only have the literal meanings that they have relative to some or other rational acts of speaker-meaning, performed by means of them in a conventional way. This is compatible with the view that the meaning intended on any particular occasion by the literal speaker, depends specifically on, and is to be explained relative to, the conventions constituting the public language he purports to be using. For the constitutive nature of the language is not dependent on that particular case of literal meaning.

Even the weak form of dependence of literal meaning on speaker-meaning advanced here is subject to well-known criticisms.<sup>9</sup> Some of them can be dealt with by taking into account the two differences with other forms of the Gricean approach, already highlighted. For its crucial use in the explication of linguistic meaning, I would only take the basic Gricean explications of the speech-acts we might call “informing” (rationally transmitting knowledge to hearer by theoretical reasoning involving recognition of intention) and “enjoining” (rationally leading the hearer to do something by practical reasoning involving recognition of intention), modified with some “mutual knowledge” clause, as explications of paradigm cases of linguistic meaning. I would readily accept that the conditions are not necessary, having only certain balanced weights. There are many other other

cases of linguistic meaning which simply cannot be characterized as forms of the two previously mentioned. In this way, well-known responses to well-known criticisms (“thinking out loud”, “the exam”, “speaking without caring to produce any effect” and so on) can acquire a more convincing shape.

There is one objection by a contemporary supporter of the Gricean programme which I think I should discuss before moving to elaborate on the third distinguishing mark of the present proposal; for, if correct, the kind of response I have outlined would not do. Neale (1992) argues in the following way against the “third clause” in Grice’s original account of *informing* (the one stating that, in felicitous cases of informing that *p*, it is rational for the speaker to intend that the belief that *p* be produced in the audience through an inference involving the recognition of his intention): “A serious problem seems to await Grice further down the road if he does not concede that the third clause is overly restrictive. Ultimately, Grice wants to define locutions of the form *by uttering x, U said that p*; but one of the conjuncts in his proposed definiens is *by uttering x, U meant that p . . .*. So if he refuses to allow that (e.g.) I can mean that I can speak in a squeaky voice by uttering, in a squeaky voice, ‘I can speak in a squeaky voice’, Grice will be forced either to conclude that I have not said that I can speak in a squeaky voice, or else abandon the idea of defining saying in terms of utterer’s meaning . . . It would seem, then, that the third clause will have to be discarded (or at least modified) if saying requires meaning” (Neale 1992, 548–9).

For independent reasons already suggested, I am prepared to grant the conclusion of this argument – namely, that the third clause is too restrictive, i.e., it is not a necessary condition for linguistic meaning. Nevertheless, I do want to keep it as characterizing prototypical cases of the phenomenon we are explicating, while Neale’s argument would preclude even this. Fortunately, there is a convincing reply to the argument. In a Gricean account, it is not an event (an utterance) in itself which means something; it is indeed an event, but only relative to a given feature or property it instantiates.<sup>10</sup> Neale’s argument overlooks this; it wrongly assumes that it makes sense to appraise whether or not a speaker can mean something with an utterance, without making this claim relative to a particular repeatable feature of the concrete event at stake.

As I myself would put the Gricean point: a speaker cannot perform a prototypical case of informing (and thus meaning) that he has a squeaky voice by any event whose intended significant feature is that it is a case of sounds uttered in a squeaky voice. The reason is Grice’s, i.e., that the speaker thereby gives the hearer no adequate indication that the latter is

intended to reach the judgment on the basis of recognition of the former's intention. On the other hand, a speaker can perform a fully prototypical case of informing that he has a squeaky voice by uttering (or inscribing) a sentence which is a conventional means for that, in a context in which the default presumption that he is abiding by the relevant conventions applies. Thus the only consequence that follows about the sort of case Neale envisages (i.e., one of an event having those two features) from a properly understood Gricean account is that it gives rise to a *prima facie* conflict, whose resolution will depend on the details of the context. As a result of such a conflict, Neale's utterance may for instance be taken as a case in which the speaker feels that he cannot restrict himself to *inform* that he can do something, and is in fact *showing* that he has the ability in question by exercising it – a different kind of speech-act. The utterance thus acquires a meaning going beyond the literal, because offering the production of squeaky sounds as a reason that one can produce them is not the same speech act as informing of the latter, and it is one not conventionally associated with an utterance of 'I can speak in a squeaky voice'. Or it might just be taken as a joke. In any case, the example does not force us either to reject or to modify the third clause as it stands. (Although, as I said, we have independent reasons for doing so.)<sup>11</sup>

*The analysis takes linguistic meaning to be compositional.* Finally, the form of the Gricean perspective I subscribe to, insists that the Gricean line that linguistic meaning entails speaker-meaning, extends to the determination of the literal meanings of what we might call *phrases*: the significant words and syntactic features which compositionally determine what utterances conventionally mean. As indicated, no attempt at reduction is involved in the claim that attributions of linguistic meaning to them are to be understood in terms of speaker-meaning; only that those attributions are to be based on the way they conventionally contribute to rational acts which have the nature captured in Gricean accounts of speaker-meaning.

The reason for an account like this to help itself to what David Lewis (1975) calls a *grammar* (a compositional account of what is literally meant by utterances on the basis of semantic properties of words and syntactic features) is that, otherwise, the appeal to speaker-meaning cannot provide a necessary condition for what is said by possible utterances of sentences (i) too long or too complicated to be actually uttered, or (ii) trivially true or for uttering which no speaker could have a sufficient reason (Schiffer 1993, 233–9; Lance and O'Leary-Hawthorne 1997, 290–4). Analogously, without the appeal to a grammar, we cannot provide in terms of speaker-meaning a sufficient condition for what is said by (i) sentences typically uttered to perform non-literal acts of meaning, or (ii) sentences which say

so bizarre things that would not be uttered but to mean something different from what they say.

What makes an account of linguistic meaning distinctively Gricean is that it is to be given in terms of the concepts fundamentally used in the Gricean account of speaker-meaning, of which the most distinctive one is that of *communicative intention*. What this amounts to is that it is to be given in terms of (self-supporting regularities involving) a specific form of rational purposive activity, characteristic of persons. Now, only a small finite subset of all logically possible utterances with a literal meaning in a typical natural language occur under some such (even if tacit) rational control. The Gricean project is thus doomed to failure if presented as by Lewis (1975), explicitly rejecting that the appeal to speaker-meaning gives any reason to ascribe to an actual language a grammar rather than another determining the same possible language.

In more recent work, Lewis acknowledges this and appeals to “extrapolation”. First, use, somehow determines meaning for the fragment of language that is actually used. There are rules of syntax and semantics that generate the right sentences with the right meanings within the used fragment. These rules also generate other, longer sentences, with meanings, outside the used fragment. Use determines some meanings, those meanings determine the rules, and the rules determine the rest of the meanings . . . . True, there are many grammars, but they are not on equal terms. Some are ‘straight’ grammars; for example, any grammar that any linguist would actually propose. Others are ‘bent’, or ‘gruesome’, grammars” (Lewis 1992, 109–10). However, as Schiffer (1993, 236–9) argues, this is still too extrinsic a way to determine the language spoken by a given individual or community. For we can think of individuals who in fact speak a finite language without grammar, or one for which they have internalized (perhaps by explicit learning) a “bent” grammar, for which Lewis’ recipe would produce the wrong extrapolation.

Loar (1981, 257–60) resorted at this point to a Chomskian psycholinguistic grammar internalized by the speaker to determine the actual language he speaks. Lewis resists this move with considerations which remind us of former arguments by him (see Lewis 1975) against positing internally represented grammars as part of a Gricean account: “Maybe there is a grammar somehow written into the brain. And conceivably it is a bent grammar, so that the language it generates differs, somewhere outside the used fragment, from the language we get by straight extrapolation. Schiffer has asked: does straight extrapolation give the right answers even then? I think so. If not, then whenever we resort to extrapolation to answer questions of syntax and semantics, we are engaged in risky speculation

about the secret workings of the brain. That seems wrong” (Lewis 1992, 110).

What Lewis finds wrong, as Schiffer guesses, “is that if the inference is risky, then language users will not know what language they are using. If *L* is used by *P* only if some grammar of *P* is used in the processing of utterances of *L*, and if no one is now in a position to go that deeply into the brain, then how can the members of *P* know that it is *L* that they are speaking?” (Schiffer 1993, 256, note 5). From our present perspective, Schiffer is right in rejoicing as follows: “But the *most* that follows from the antecedent of this question is that members of *P* do not have knowledge of the function *L* in a way that affords them a finite definition of it. They may nevertheless know that, say, they speak Italian, where ‘Italian’ is a rigid designator of the language they speak; or they may have all sort of knowledge by description of the language they use, where the descriptions under which they have their knowledge of *L*, do not give the wherewithal to determine the grammar that in fact makes *L* the language they use” (*ibid. id.*).

I take Schiffer’s suggestion on board. A potential source of resistance to accepting it, lies in that it involves referring to the language whose nature one is attempting to define in Gricean terms *in the explicans* of our rational reconstruction, not only in the *explicandum*. People approaching the Gricean project with the sort of reductionist goals we outlined earlier will not be happy with this. Once the reductionist goals are abandoned, however, there is no reason why we should not take Schiffer’s advice. We will not get rid of references to and quantifications over genuinely social entities in favor of merely psychological things; the reason is that there are genuinely social entities, which, like any other genuine thing, are what they are and nothing else.

For the purposes of this paper, the core of the view defended here on linguistic meaning can be summarized as follows. Acts of meaning are those acts characterized in Gricean explications of speaker-meaning; they are, constitutively, occurrences rationally directed at producing certain mental states through a process involving recognition of that goal. This is achieved by the occurrence having a feature appropriate for its goal. Although this is not necessary, the feature may consist in the occurrence being the result of putting adequately together, devices conventionally used for making that intention manifest in a language that the utterer speaks: semantic units, including not only words and word-parts, but also other more structural syntactic features. In that case, what act of meaning the speaker represents himself as performing is determined by the conventional contribution made to such acts in that language, by the semantic units he has put together.<sup>12</sup>

The linguistic meaning of a unit is therefore its contribution to the acts of meaning conventionally made by using it, and the linguistic meaning of an utterance the resultant of the linguistic meaning of the units composing it. I see this as the best confirmed philosophical hypothesis so far advanced.

## 2. TWO APPROACHES TO THE SEMANTICS/PRAGMATICS DISTINCTION

I will contrast now, by examining a few examples, a “Wittgensteinian” approach very popular nowadays with the Gricean one I have outlined. The approach appears in writings by Bezuidenhout, Carston, Recanati and Schiffer, among others. I will focus for the most part on a concrete manifestation of this theoretical divide on which I am especially interested, the proper treatment of referential uses of descriptions and descriptive uses of indexicals. According to a view I share with other writers, both referential uses of descriptions and descriptive uses of indexicals are pragmatic phenomena, in the sketched Gricean sense. In themselves, those phenomena are an insufficient basis for abandoning a semantic analysis of descriptions and indexicals placing them in different semantic categories (those of quantifiers and of singular terms, respectively). Like those other writers, I would support this contention by following a well-known Gricean line of argument involving the previous distinctions.

As a first approximation, we would say that the asymmetry in the semantic behavior of definite descriptions, vis-à-vis that of indexicals lies in that, while definite descriptions behave like quantifiers, indexicals behave like singular designators. There are different ways of elaborating on the nature of the intended difference. For present purposes, there is no need to go into the details of the account of the asymmetry that I favor, which I have presented elsewhere.<sup>13</sup> The following outline should be enough. Any token-indexical occurring in an utterance is associated with a certain “token-reflexive” description; in the case of a token **he** of ‘he’, the token-reflexive description is *the male most salient when he is produced*. This description typically suffices to identify a particular object; the indexical’s contribution to the semantically signified truth-condition is this individual. The description merely fixes this contribution, being, in Recanati’s (1993) terms, “truth-conditionally irrelevant”. I account for this “irrelevancy” by treating the descriptive material as, in Grice’s terms, conventionally implicated; in my own terms, as contributing in a specific way to what the utterance conventionally takes for granted, or presupposes.<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, the contribution of a description, *the F*, to the truth-condition, literally signified by an utterance, is analogous to that of a quantificational expression like *every F* or *some F*, *mutatis mutandis*. I should note that

what is *conventionally* implicated is here taken to be part of the linguistic meaning of an utterance, in accordance with the characterization of semantics provided in the preceding section. The linguistic meaning of an utterance includes not only the utterance's truth-conditions; it includes also its illocutionary force, because an illocutionary force is always (more or less precisely) conventionally conveyed. On the present view, it includes also the utterance's conventional implicatures. I will use 'linguistic content' to refer to the linguistic meaning of an utterance abstracting its force away, and 'pragmatic content' as contrasting phrase. In the ensuing discussion, 'linguistic content' substitutes for the phrase more commonly used, 'what is said'. As I understand him, by using this term Grice was referring to the conventionally signified truth-conditions; the dispute we will examine goes beyond this, to embrace also the nature and role of the conventionally conveyed descriptive material related to indexicals.<sup>15</sup>

I will not go any further into the details of the account, but I would like to emphasize two aspects regarding which, although conforming to the Gricean conception of the semantics-pragmatics distinction I have outlined, it differs from other views on it. In the first place, this proposal rejects the common assumption that semantics only deals with features associated with expression-types. It stands in opposition to these claims: "linguistic knowledge concerns expression types, not tokens" (Bach 1987, 87); "semantics [...] is concerned with linguistic types, not tokens. If a token of an expression carries any information not encoded by the type of which it is a token, that information is not *linguistic* information" (*ibid.*, p. 5); "that a sentence is actually uttered is a pragmatic fact" (Bach, manuscript). In a token-reflexive account of context-dependence, the main semantic properties (e.g., truth-conditional import) are assigned to tokens (to be sure, relative to properties conventionally associated with the types they instantiate); tokens also contribute to what the utterance conventionally presupposes, i.e., to constraints which the utterance places on the background set of assumptions constituting what Stalnaker (1974) calls 'the conversational common ground'.

Writers like Bach think of an actual language as a system of general rules or facts, linking repeatable entities (types) with their repeatable linguistic features. I see it as a set of actual and potential utterances, whose relevant linguistic properties depend on such a system of general rules. (And on whatever those rules depend in their turn, most importantly specific features of the psychology of language-users, first- or third-personally accessible.) I do not wish to speculate on the theoretical motivation which might be given for Bach's view. Mine lies on the Gricean theoretical framework outlined in the previous section. It is constitutive of a linguistic

utterance that it is a conventional means to make certain communicative intentions manifest. In the case of indexicals, those communicative intentions rely conventionally on features of the utterances themselves; they take crucial advantage, in accordance with linguistic conventions, of the concrete entities they are. This is why we should think of natural languages, in which this device of token-reflexivity is ubiquitous, as constituted by the concrete acts themselves.

The second distinctive aspect I want to emphasize is this: the fact that, conventionally, the use of a given expression leaves to pragmatic factors a fuller determination of its contribution to what is meant, is compatible with the utterance having a fully-fledged conventionally conveyed linguistic content. For instance, the token-reflexive rule for ‘that’ establishes that the truth-conditional import of any instance *i* of that type is the entity *of a given contextually determined sort* which is demonstrated at the occasion of the production of *i*. This assigns a full conventional content to utterances of ‘that is a tree’, even though one somehow unspecific and relying on context for a fuller pragmatic determination. A similar point can be made about incomplete definite descriptions. A natural line for the Russellian of a Reichenbachian persuasion to take is to say that, when a manifestly incomplete description *the F* is successfully used in an utterance *u* of which an instance *i* of *the F* is a part, additional *token-reflexive* descriptive material is implicitly understood, which, together with that conveyed by *F* provides the intended description. This conventionally understood, implicit descriptive material can be given by means of a description like *the most salient F at the occasion when i is produced*.

In terms of the useful distinctions made by Recanati in his contribution to this symposium, “What Is Said”, these suggestions place me in essential agreement with “Minimalism” on what is said, as based on what he calls “the traditional picture”. There is one important difference, though. Recanati characterizes the traditional view as not conceiving of language as a form of rational activity, more specifically as the form of rational activity which Grice explicated as acts dependent on communicative intentions. This, as should be obvious, is not the proper contrast between the view I am defending and the one Recanati himself supports. The main reason I have for characterizing the contribution of indexicals and incomplete descriptions as suggested results from applying to them the hypothesis set forth at the end of the previous section: i.e., that those characterizations provide the best way of explicating the regular, conventional contribution of those expressions to acts of meaning made by means of them. And, as I was at pains to make clear in the previous section, that hypothesis makes the linguistic meaning of a semantic unit dependent on psychological facts.



The difference between us has rather to do with the kind of psychological states on which, according to each view, semantic theories systematically rely.

On the present view, semantic interpretation cannot deliver (as Recanati suggests) “only semantic schemata”, precisely because no proper act of meaning can involve only schemata. It is full propositions, with full truth-conditions, that the speakers can inform about, enjoin others to make true, and so on. For all Recanati says, by looking at what speakers do in a purely conventional manner in the way I have suggested, we do find complete conventionally meant propositions. It is true that, typically, when a speaker utters a token *i* of ‘I’, he takes for granted that more identificatory information is available in context than just *producer of i*: say, how he looks at that time. But this purely linguistic piece of information is enough for uniquely identifying somebody (in felicitous acts), and it is the only piece of information conventionally contributing to literal acts of meaning involving tokens of ‘I’. My view is that speakers know this (unthematizedly), and rely on their audiences sharing with them this knowledge to pick up from context other pieces of identificatory information.

Similarly, it is true that when a speaker utters a token *i* of ‘that’, he takes for granted that more information is available in context about the sort of entity intended than *salient when i is produced*. But, again, it is also true that this piece of information is enough to identify uniquely a sort (in felicitous acts),<sup>16</sup> and it is a piece of information which we can take to be conventionally contributing to literal acts of meaning involving tokens of ‘that’. One significant reason for thinking that a reference to a salient class is conventionally implicit in pronominal uses of demonstratives like ‘that’ lies in the fact that, in contrast with indexicals like ‘he’ and ‘you’, those demonstratives have also, conventionally, an adjectival use: ‘that tree’, etc. Speakers unthematizedly know this, and rely on their audience’s sharing with them this knowledge to pick up from context pieces of classificatory information when not explicitly given by the utterance.

Let me briefly examine two more examples frequently discussed in the literature, to give the flavor of the Gricean view I am endorsing. When a speaker utters a token *i* of ‘have had’ (as in ‘I have had breakfast’), he takes for granted that more information is available in context about the past time interval to which he is referring than just that it is in the past with respect to the time at which *i* is produced, and it is salient in the context of *i*. This further information would determine a pragmatically communicated content. But, again, this is conventional, and determines sufficiently the relevant class in felicitous contexts; my view is that speakers know this unthematizedly, and rely on this knowledge, for guiding their audiences in

pragmatically obtaining from context more specific information about this time interval. When a speaker utters a token *i* of ‘is raining’ (as in ‘it is raining’), he takes for granted that more information is available in context about the place he is referring to than that it is salient when the token *i* is produced. But it is a conventional fact about the use of the present tense with verbs meaning located events such as ‘to rain’ that the place referred to is indicated in that way, as it were, by default, and speakers rely on their audiences sharing with them this knowledge.

This view is close to Bach’s (1994) treatment of those cases that he describes as (pragmatic) “expansion”, which include examples like ‘I have had breakfast’. Cases like ‘it is raining’, however, of what he describes as pragmatic “completion”, cannot, he thinks, receive a similar treatment. In those cases, he claims, semantics alone does not provide a fully-fledged linguistic content determining a truth-value; we have to rely for that on pragmatic processes. I am suggesting that there is no relevant distinction between the two cases; what Bach says regarding “expansion” applies also to what he characterizes as “completion”. He overlooks this, I think, because he has an incorrect picture of how indexicals work to begin with. Ultimately, the mistake might derive from his unmotivated assumption that facts involving tokens are pragmatic.

Regarding what he judges as cases involving completion, Bach says that “there is no theoretical basis for denying their semantic incompleteness by inventing hidden syntactic slots that must be filled in order for a complete proposition to be expressed” (Bach, manuscript). As far as I can see, Bach only supports this attribution of inventiveness to a proposal like the present one with this reasoning: “indexical reference fixes the interpretation of an element that occurs in the utterance . . . on the other hand, the conceptual gaps in utterances of semantically underdeterminate sentences do not correspond to anything in the sentences themselves, not even to empty syntactic categories” (Bach 1994, 133). As we have seen, semantic conventions associated with indexical types, when applied to tokens, provide (in well-behaved contexts) those tokens with a referent and also with a token-reflexive referent-fixer (which can be further enriched pragmatically, and it is in fact typically so enriched). Now, the conventions at stake are not only related to separate words; they are sometimes related, e.g., to lexemes indicating time. I have suggested reasons to think that analogous conventions are associated with lexical items like the verb ‘to rain’. The main considerations here are along the lines of those I have used for the claim that a relevant class is indicated when pronominal uses of demonstratives like ‘this’ are involved. In the latter case, we have the

fact of contrasting adjectival uses; in the former, contrasting uses in which places are explicitly referred to, or quantified over.

Recanati says that in ascribing to expressions meanings like the ones I have been canvassing we are philosophically cheating. I suppose that this feeling is in part due to my reliance on a general notion of contextual salience. Of course, much more empirical work should be done to clarify what criteria of salience (or accessibility) are relied upon by language users. However, I do not think this makes illegitimate the appeal to the concept, because it seems clear that, no matter which the details are, language users do rely (unthematizedly) on such a notion. The best policy for showing that we are not cheating consists, I think, in providing a clear philosophical rationale for the Gricean line. This is the project to which I have been trying to contribute. The reasons for attributing to speakers the forms of unthematized knowledge just illustrated are, ultimately, the reasons we have for thinking that languages are constituted by conventional regularities involving the rational activities explicated by Grice as cases of speaker-meaning.

Let us thus go back to our main example. There are uses of indexicals which are descriptive. Compare the following sentence found in a periodical (“How Many People Can the Earth Support?”, Joel E. Cohen, *The New York Review of Books*, October 8, 1998, p. 31): ‘three quarters of a billion people, more or less, were hungry yesterday, are hungry today, and will be hungry tomorrow’. It is fair to assume that the author did not intend to make a singular claim concerning the day when he produced the instantiation of ‘today’ from which the one we happen to come across originated (and the days before and after it). The reason is not that we, the audience, lack any means of identifying that day with sufficient understanding; for we have just done that. The reason is rather that the author is supposed to speak with the authority of someone in a position to impart knowledge, and he is also supposed to be willing to impart as much relevant knowledge as he is in a position to give. Whatever his justification for this presumed knowledge is, it is fair to assume that it is not justification specific for a singular proposition about that day, but rather justification for a stronger, universal claim about all the days in a certain period including the day when he produced that token and any days at which other tokens originated with that one might be encountered by a potential reader. It is perhaps to make this clearer that he mentions three days (‘yesterday, today and tomorrow’) instead of just one.

For the same reason, the speaker cannot be meaning a singular proposition about the day when we come across an instance of ‘today’ originated with the token he produced. In this case, it is correct to say that an ad-

ditional reason is that he lacks any means of distinguishing the day in question from any other at which an instance of ‘today’ originating in his writing might be encountered. On the other hand, there must be some point to his using singular terms, instead of just asserting the quantificational claim he is in a position to make. It is thus fair to assume that he is not making a singular claim, but a general descriptive one about the particular day on which we have come across the token-indexicals originated with his utterance. Given any instantiation of ‘today’ originated with his writing and encountered during a certain period, he is making a general claim about the day when such instantiation is read, whatever that day is.

To account for descriptive uses of indexicals like this one, the defender of the asymmetry would have recourse at this point to the Gricean explication of conversational implicatures (essentially involving a “derivation” along the lines of the argument we have just produced), to support the view that the fact that utterances like the one in our example express a general descriptive proposition is a pragmatic one. He would also insist that the utterance still has, even in this case, its literal, singular meaning, in that the derivation of the pragmatic meaning takes at the very least as a premise the assumption that the literal meaning has been expressed. Similarly, there are cases, of which Donnellan provided famous examples, in which descriptions appear to play a merely “reference-fixing” role for an individual, which is the intended contribution to the expressed proposition. The defender of the asymmetry will suggest, analogously, that this is also a pragmatic phenomenon, and that, even in those cases, the literal, general proposition is also semantically conveyed, because the assumption that it has been expressed plays a crucial role in the derivation of the pragmatic content.

The writers I am arguing with dispute this. They acknowledge that there are straightforward cases of non-linguistic content – paradigmatically, particularized conversational implicatures. At dinner time, *A* suggests to go to a restaurant; *B* retorts by uttering ‘I have had dinner’. This conveys that *B* does not agree to go into the restaurant; the content of this speech-act, that (say) *A* and *B* do not go into the restaurant, is a non-linguistic content for everybody participating in the dispute – an *implicated content*, let us say. Now, the Gricean line to trace the semantics-pragmatics distinction I have been advocating so far contends that linguistic content goes only as far as to characterize the period before that of the utterance during which the speaker has had dinner as salient in the context of the utterance; the Gricean view takes the content describing further this period as being, say, of less than three hours, to be as non-linguistic as implicated contents. It is this which the writers with which I am arguing dispute. They claim

that linguistic content includes in this case the pragmatically obtained material concerning the relative shortness of the signified time interval. The same, they think, applies to referential uses of definite descriptions and attributive uses of indexicals: the contents obviously meant by speakers and understood by their audiences in these cases are according to them straightforward cases of linguistic content; they are not, as the Gricean takes them to be, implicated contents.

To have a coherent theory, therefore, those writers must have a criterion for distinguishing those pragmatic features which are part of what they consider linguistic content, from merely implicated contents. They have offered two criteria, as far as I know. These criteria are invoked by them in arguments against the Gricean view. The first criterion has been given by Carston (1988). She claims that linguistic content is not logically entailed by implicated content; i.e., that truly implicated contents cannot be precisifications of linguistic contents, logically stronger than them. The real basis for this principle, I guess, lies in what I take to be the main consideration motivating these writers, to be discussed in the following section. But it should be clear that the principle is unjustified, for there are uncontroversial cases of implicatures where it fails to apply. Consider, e.g., Grice's famous example of a generalized implicature, 'I saw John with a woman', which typically conveys that I saw John with a woman different from his wife, sister or mother.

The second criterion has been advanced by Recanati (1993): if a sentence conveying an implicated content when uttered in a context is placed under the scope of logical operators, the implicated content is not "inherited" by the new, longer sentence (in the context differing from the previous one in that the utterance of the latter sentence replaces the other). However, the contents on which the debate focuses are thus inherited; for instance, the understood characterization of the salient interval as relatively short is also there when instead of 'I have had dinner' we say 'I have not had dinner', or, instead of 'he has had dinner', 'if he has had dinner, it has not been very much, for he is very hungry'. This criterion, however, fares as poorly as Carston's: uncontroversial cases of implicated contents are also inherited. In another famous example by Grice, an utterance of 'there is a gas station around the corner' implicates that there is gas available around the corner. This implicated content is inherited in some longer utterances: just consider 'if there is a gas station around the corner, I do not need to worry any more'; and 'there is no gas station nearby' can be regarded as not falsified by the existence of a closed gas station around the corner.

Counterexamples are not by themselves sufficient to reject the criteria offered by Carston and Recanati, for they might simply reject them; but the counterexamples can be backed up with more theoretical support. The problem with Carston's and Recanati's criteria is that an account of the constitutive nature of conversational implicatures such as Grice's does not give them any basis; and they have not provided any real alternative supporting their principles. Grice's account characterizes implicatures as acts of meaning in which the speaker exploits mutually known rational principles guiding communication over and above the semantics of any particular language, and mutually known knowledge of the world, together with the linguistic meaning of his utterances, to convey by means of these utterances a non-linguistic meaning. This account does not provide any basis for the principles. Take Carston's: Grice's account suggests straightforward cases of implicatures which will typically violate it. (Consider cases produced by exploiting the maxims of quantity, e.g., ironic understatement: 'he is a bit short', said of someone manifestly very short.) Similarly, in opposition to Recanati's principle, Grice's constitutive account of pragmatic phenomena allows us to predict cases where the implicated contents will be inherited, and cases where they will rather be cancelled. Stalnaker (1974) has provided, inside the Gricean framework, a pragmatic account of why presuppositions (both those having a semantic origin and those having a purely pragmatic one) are inherited in certain linguistic contexts, which will also do for implicated contents. This account explains why the conversational implicatures that the utterance of a sentence can convey in a given context will be preserved when the sentence is uttered instead as the antecedent of certain conditionals, etc, and why they will be cancelled in other cases.<sup>17</sup>

What is ultimately in fact behind Carston's and Recanati's principles is, I believe, the main consideration for the Wittgensteinian view, to which I will turn presently. For instance, when Carston defends intuitively her principle, she suggests this line of reasoning: if  $p$  is logically stronger than  $q$ , an utterance cannot convey the two contents; for language users will not have any real application for the weaker content, the stronger being appropriate for anything for which they might need the weaker. An argument along these lines, however, can only justify the following: if  $p$  is logically stronger than  $q$ , language users will only *pay attention to*, or *keep consciously in mind* the former and not the latter. Inferring further from what ordinary speakers are typically conscious of, to the correct account of linguistic meaning, is precisely the fallacy I am most interested in exposing.

As a final consideration before I address this fallacy, let me mention that the cancellability of the contents which the Gricean proposal counts as pragmatic, in the same sort of circumstances in which uncontroversial cases of implicated contents are cancelled, also favors the Gricean view. ('I have not had breakfast. Not just recently: I decided quite some time ago already not to eat anything until six hours after I get up.') In reply to this, Bezuidenhout (1997a, 203) objects that a context in which someone utters 'I have not had breakfast' followed by 'Not just recently . . .' is a different context from one in which one just utters 'I have not had breakfast'. This is true, but beside the point. Straightforward cases of conversational implicatures are cancellable – not just for the Gricean, for everybody in the debate. To pay due attention to Bezuidenhout's correct point, we should be careful about what cancellation involves. Here is a reasonable suggestion. We have to consider a context which differs from the actual one only in that, instead of the utterance  $p$  giving rise to the alleged implicature  $q$ , what is uttered is rather something like:  $p$ , but not  $q$ . In such an alternative context, the speaker will not be contradicting himself, but cancelling the implicated content  $q$ . Contents counted as pragmatic by our Gricean proposal (including the cases under dispute) are cancellable under this characterization.

Bezuidenhout (1997a, 203) also repeats a point first argued by Walker (1975) in reaction to Grice's strategy. The point is that the calculability and cancellability of a given content is compatible with that content being linguistic. The expression whose semantics we are discussing might well be linguistically ambiguous. If so, the allegedly pragmatic meaning will be derived in context on the basis of conversational maxims; and, of course, it will be cancellable without contradiction. At this point, the Gricean will have recourse to additional criteria, also suggested by his constitutive characterization of the semantics/pragmatics distinction. A very important one is Kripke's (1977). Suppose that expression  $A$  has, uncontroversially, the conventional meaning  $M$ , and that it is also frequently used with meaning  $N$ . If it is reasonable to think that, even in a language whose semantics has been explicitly stipulated to be such that  $A$  has only meaning  $M$ , the expression will frequently acquire meaning  $N$  on the basis of the pragmatic mechanisms described by Grice, then it is to that extent reasonable to think that expression  $A$  has in our language just meaning  $M$  instead of being ambiguous. This sort of consideration can also be used in support of the Gricean viewpoint in the cases I have been canvassing.

In sum, the Gricean proposal presented in the previous section, whose application we have been illustrating, provides a theoretically well-motivated distinction between pragmatic and semantic facts. Carston

(1988) criticizes as unmotivated a “Linguistic Direction Principle”, with effects analogous to those of our Gricean proposal, which counts as part of linguistic meaning only what is signified by some linguistic feature of the utterance. I think I have at least sketched such a motivation, dependent on the Gricean constitutive account of the nature of linguistic meaning. What we have seen so far is that the writers who reject the Gricean proposal do not have an alternative constitutive account, capable of tracing a sufficiently clear-cut distinction between what they want to consider as aspects of linguistic content, and what they recognize as merely implicated contents. I will now discuss the basic assumptions which motivate their views.

### 3. THE WITTGENSTEINIAN MASTER ARGUMENT

In this final section, I will pursue my main critical goal: to expose what I take to be the main line of argument used by the Wittgensteinians. We will find in the criticisms they make of the Gricean line a common presumption: that semantic facts are those, and only those, which can easily become objects of conscious, explicit, occurrent judgments made by competent users of the language. I think that this is an implausible contention, from which no theoretically reasonable characterization of the facts is to follow.

Let us consider a few examples of the Wittgensteinian master argument. Schiffer (1995) has argued for a symmetric treatment of indexicals and descriptions by focusing on referential uses of incomplete descriptions. The crucial move of Schiffer’s argument appears in the following text: “[...] the two cases [indexicals and descriptions] have *exact psychological parity with respect to those psychological facts on which the relevant speaker meaning would have to supervene*. If you ask the speaker what she meant in uttering “The guy is drunk”, you will not get a report that favours the description theory: the speaker will almost certainly offer up an object-dependent proposition involving Pergola, the intended referent of her utterance of “the guy”. If a *theorist* is to be justified in discovering a [...] description-theoretic act of meaning in the utterance of “The guy is drunk”, it will have to be on the basis of the fact that the speaker intended it to be mutual knowledge between her and her audience that certain definite descriptions applied to Pergola, and that certain parts of these were essential to the communicative act, in that the speaker would not have uttered her sentence if she had thought those descriptions were not mutually known to be instantiated. If we are warranted in ascribing an indeterminate description-theoretic act of meaning to the speaker when she utters “The guy is drunk”, then it will have to be solely on the basis



of these psychological facts. But these very same facts are also obtained when the speaker utters “He is drunk”. For example, in neither case would the speaker have produced her utterance if she had not thought that just one man was staggering up to the podium to give a talk. Moreover, these psychological facts pertaining to contextually-relevant definite descriptions apply to *any* utterance of an indexical-containing sentence, and I shall assume that this is clear to you on reflection” (*Op. cit.*, 120).

Let us grant that, if we ask the ordinary speaker what he has in mind when he produces two contrasting utterances, one involving an indexical and another an incomplete description referentially used, no asymmetry will be revealed from his answers. In particular, his answers will not manifest anything corresponding to the contrast between a Gricean derivation of the allegedly non-literal singular meaning of the descriptive utterance, and the Gricean explication of the literal singular meaning of the indexical utterance. The important point is to notice that Schiffer presumes that any confirmation or disconfirmation for a claim about the semantic properties of expressions, has to be found at the level of that kind of psychological fact: those which can be established by asking the ordinary speaker.

Recanati (1993) provides a second example. He is not against the semantic asymmetry of indexicals and definite descriptions; however, he would dispute the pragmatic account of referential uses of descriptions which I have alluded to, and I am interested in looking at an important part of his argument. His analysis involves assimilating the distinction between general and referential uses of descriptions to what he calls “metonymical transfer”. Imagine that two car-fans, *A* and *B*, who mutually know each other to be car lovers, are discussing the merits of two candidates for a given job. They do not know the candidates’ names, but they know (that the other knows, and so on) the rather interesting cars (of different makes) the candidates use. In this context, *A* says: ‘I believe that the Porsche is more considerate and will be a better colleague’. It is clear that ‘the Porsche’ refers here to one of the candidates, and not to a car or car-brand. This is a case that Recanati calls “metonymical transfer”; according to him, referential uses of descriptions are derived in this manner from attributive uses.

Now, the Gricean should not feel threatened by the assimilation of general and referential uses of descriptions, respectively, to the conventional use of ‘the Porsche’ to refer to a car-brand and to its use in the example to refer to a car-owner; for he would be prepared to count the latter also as a pragmatic phenomenon of non-literal meaning. Recanati would reject this suggestion, by appealing to a certain “availability principle”: “In deciding whether a pragmatically determined aspect of utterance meaning is part

of what is said, that is, in making a decision concerning what is said, we should always try to preserve our pre-theoretic intuitions on the matter” (Recanati 1993, 248). The application Recanati makes of this involves a presumption, similar to the one we found in Schiffer’s argument. If a Gricean implicature analysis of the “Porsche” example is to be rejected on the basis of this principle, for instance, it is because ordinary speakers do not have the intuition that a literal meaning, involving the absurd attribution of human properties to a car or car-brand, is at all involved in the interpretation of A’s sentence: “it does not seem that the speaker says something absurd in order to convey something different” (Recanati 1993, 264; see also the discussion in pp. 246–51). As in Schiffer’s case, this use of the principle involves the presumption that confirmation or disconfirmation for proposals about the semantic properties of expressions should be found at the level of the easily available conscious, explicit, occurrent thoughts of ordinary speakers. This is almost explicit in Recanati’s contribution to this symposium, when he characterizes his “maximalist” view as contending that the input for the derivation of pragmatic implicatures (i.e., the output of semantics) “is consciously available”. It is clear that he means *consciously available to ordinary speakers*, i.e., available without recourse to the sort of theorizing characteristic of philosophical semantics.

A rather startling example of the kind of questionable psychologizing which I am discussing, is furnished by yet another defendant of an approach like Recanati’s, Ramachandran (1996). If a quantificational account of a referential utterance of ‘the table is broken’ were correct, he suggests, we should feel “a tension . . . . Intuitively, what is *literally asserted* is a purely general proposition where no specific table is mentioned, whereas what is *conveyed* is a proposition that *does* concern a specific table” (Ramachandran 1996, 378). We are supposed to subscribe to an account like Recanati’s so as to explain that “Description sentences and sentences involving names or demonstratives are similar in that there seems to be nothing wrong or improper about using them in certain contexts, to convey singular (object-dependent) propositions” (*ibid.*, 383). However, the fact that our conscious experiences are as Ramachandran indicates, that we do not “feel” any “tension” when confronted with referential uses of incomplete descriptions, is irrelevant for the debate: it is compatible with the correctness of both accounts, for they should not be understood as addressing the explanation of those facts.

Another example is provided by Bezuidenhout (1997b), criticizing the view that descriptive interpretations of indexicals like the one exemplified above (‘three quarters of a billion people, more or less, were hungry yesterday, are hungry today, and will be hungry tomorrow’) are non-literal with

the following argument: “But it is rather implausible to say that in this case the listener first comes to think of the referent in an identifying way [in Bezuidenhout’s theory, this corresponds to “understanding a singular proposition”], and then retreats to thinking of the referent in a merely criterial way [in Bezuidenhout’s theory, this corresponds to “understanding a general descriptive proposition”]. I would argue that it is precisely because the listener is unable to think of the referent in an identifying way in the context [...] that the listener understands the speaker to have used the indexical attributively” (Bezuidenhout 1997b, 401). Once again, we could grant that the ordinary speaker does not entertain the idea that the speaker is intending a singular proposition. What I want to highlight is the presumption that, because the alleged literal meaning does not enter the conscious experience of ordinary speakers when interpreting the sentence, a Gricean account is inadequate.

The final example is provided by Nunberg (1993), who offers two reasons against treating as non-linguistic descriptive uses of indexicals. The first is that “sentences containing descriptive uses of indexicals may be incoherent if the indexicals are interpreted as making singular references”. The examples he considers include ‘I am traditionally allowed to order whatever I like for my last meal’, ‘tomorrow is always the biggest party night of the year’. He says: “the adverbs *usually* and *always* must be understood as involving quantification over instances, but these readings are not possible if the subjects of the sentences are interpreted as referring to individuals or particular times. So it is hard to see what coherent ‘literal’ interpretations we could assign to these utterances” (Nunberg 1993, 32). What justifies, however, the assumption that a Gricean derivation of a non-linguistic content must start from a coherent one? Well on the contrary; a good reason to trigger the derivation is that the literal, secondary interpretation is “incoherent”; the hypothesis that the speaker is abiding by the conversational maxims, together with this first blush blatant violation of the first maxim of quality, then takes the audience (as indeed intended by the speaker) to the non-literal, primary one. ‘Bill is not himself today’ (which will be interpreted as non-literally meaning that today Bill lacks some of the attributes that characterize him) is a good example of this. Grice contemplated these cases, as potential explanations of metaphors; compare his example ‘you are the cream of my coffee’ which, literally taken, involves “categorical falsity” (Grice 1975, 34).<sup>18</sup>

It is puzzling that Nunberg thinks that the Gricean account requires the literal interpretation to be “coherent”. It is equally puzzling that Recanati, who on behalf of his own view replies to Nunberg along the previous lines, agrees with Nunberg’s criticism when applied to the Gricean. In a revealing

passage, Recanati justifies in this way the puzzling assumption he thereby shares with Nunberg: “In [the Gricean] framework, the proposition literally expressed, viz. the (absurd) proposition that the speaker – a particular person – is usually allowed to order his last meal, would have to be somehow entertained in the process of interpreting [‘I am traditionally allowed to order whatever I like for my last meal’]. I agree with Nunberg that this consequence is unwelcome” (Recanati 1993, 321). Recanati’s rather indeterminate notion of “somehow entertaining” a proposition has to be interpreted so that this is “unwelcome” when the proposition is “absurd”. An interpretation compatible with this which comes to mind, and which the text at least allows, is the following: in its literal meaning, the sentence has to express a proposition regarding what a thinker may rationally adopt the propositional attitudes commensurate with the illocutionary point of the type of speech act involved: belief, if we are considering an assertion, intention, if an order or request is at stake, etc.

This view might have been motivated by the assumption that the Gricean theoretical claims should have clear-cut counterparts in conscious processes immediately accessible to speakers on reflection. The Gricean view, on this interpretation, involves the notion that the audience is intended, firstly, to consciously interpret the sentence as if it had been meant with its literal meaning in an ordinary way, and then to initiate a conscious derivation. It should be clear that this saddles the Gricean with a view that he has no need to hold. The Gricean process of deriving an implicature can be triggered by the merely tacit realization that, if conventional rules are applied, in context, to the instantiated sentence, a communicative intention blatantly flouting the maxims is to be attributed to the speaker; and I do not see any reason whatsoever why the expression of an “absurd proposition” (whose assertability, etc., no rational being would for one moment consciously “entertain”) is not to be taken as a particular case of this.

From the present viewpoint, all these writers presuppose that the semantic project is other than it in fact is. Let me avail myself to the concept of a *conscious, explicit, occurrent* thought at this point (a CEO-thought henceforth). Perhaps one or two of the notions I use here can be explicated in terms of the others, but we do not need to care about that for our purposes. CEO-thoughts are, for instance, the perceptual judgment we make about the distribution of observable properties, events and objects in the scene before our senses when we take our sensory experience at face value; judgements about the past made by taking at face value our apparent episodic memories; judgments or intentions which we make by fully endorsing utterances in our language, assertive or prescriptive; reasonings which we make by carefully going through their steps, as expressed by

utterances in our language. The above examples evidently presuppose that, for a semantic proposal to be correct, the propositional attitudes it posits should be easily available to ordinary users of the target expressions, in the form of some of their CEO-thoughts.

Now, I should say straight away that I sympathize to a certain extent with the attraction to assumptions, such as Recanati's Availability Principle. The Gricean picture of language use emphasizes that it is a rational process. Merely "subpersonal-level" states cannot account for this. There is another view of semantic interpretation, alternative to Recanati's, which avoids any reliance on the sort of first-personal psychological states involved in speaker-meaning. On this view, semantic facts depend at most, on functional or neurological ("subpersonal") states, only empirically available to the subjects instantiating them. They do not depend on the kind of psychological state distinctive of persons, available in a privileged, non-empirical way to their subjects. On the view Recanati defends, semantic facts do depend on personal-level psychological states, but only on the most superficial, most easily available. The proposal I am making, tries to navigate a middle course between the Scylla of the subpersonal view, and the Charibdis of the surface-psychological view, defended by Recanati and others.

This is why we should be careful when we reply to the Wittgensteinian master argument, on behalf of the Gricean view, that the posited mental processes are only supposed to be "tacit" or "implicit". Thus, for instance, Evans and McDowell (1976, xix–xxiii) complain that the Gricean inferentialist account of meaning and understanding is at odds with the phenomenology of those activities, as much as a traditional inferentialist account of perception is at odds with the phenomenology of that activity. Loar (1981, 248–52) replies that the allegation is correct, but beside the point, in that "the subsidiary '*intentions*' of Grice's and Schiffer's accounts can be realistically acknowledged in the form of operative implicit expectations without which the utterance would not have occurred" (*ibid.*, 251), while on the part of the hearer the account can make do with an "implicit reasoning" constituted by "implicit beliefs such that without them the hearer would not ascribe the meaning he does ascribe" (*ibid.*, 252). In a similar vein, Lewis writes: "An action may be rational, and may be explained by the agent's beliefs and desires, even though that action was done by habit, and the agent gave no thought to the beliefs and desires which were his reason for acting. A habit may be under the agent's rational control in this sense: if that habit ever ceased to serve the agent's desires according to his beliefs, it would at once be overridden and corrected by conscious reasoning. Action done by a habit of this sort is both habitual

and rational. Likewise for habits of believing. Our normal use of language is rational, since it is under rational control” (Lewis 1975, 181).

The Gricean view presented in the first section suggests that, while these replies are correct as far as they go, as understood by Loar and Lewis they do not go far enough. A way to support an ascription of tacit knowledge is by finding a system of tacit knowledge in the Chomskian sense, as elaborated by Evans (1985) and Davies (1987). The important characteristic of a Chomskian system of tacit knowledge is that we can only be justified in ascribing it on the basis of empirical evidence: psycholinguistic data about processing time, priming, etc., about patterns of acquisition and loss of the ability, neurological data, and so on. We can be justified in claiming that a system known in those ways, is a system of tacit beliefs, if the causal processes constituting the system, mirror the processes of someone who had the relevant beliefs in an explicit form.

Let us use ‘phrase’, as before, to refer to any proper part of an utterance which plays a crucial role in a compositional determination of the literal meaning of the utterance; phrases can be words instantiated in the utterance, or more abstract structural traits also with a semantic import. The main problem confronting us in our attempt to provide a sufficient reply to the Wittgensteinian master arguments, concerns the expression-meaning of phrases. We have to show that the sort of psychological fact to which the writers I have quoted appeal, is semantically irrelevant. The literal meaning of expressions have to be derived by taking seriously the fact that language is a rational activity whose point is that articulated in Gricean explications of speaker-meaning. As suggested in the first section, we have to look at the pattern shown in the conventional use of the expressions whose semantics we want to comprehend, and not to the CEO of ordinary speakers. Now, when it comes to this problem, writers like Lewis and Loar feel that such an appeal to unthematized knowledge on behalf of the Gricean program cannot be made. What I contend is that the sort of appeal to unthematized knowledge they are prepared to make at the level of whole utterances should and can be made also at the level of phrases.

Lewis and Loar are prepared to invoke unthematized knowledge corresponding to the states posited in Gricean explications at the level of utterance-meaning, which in their view exists and suffices for the correctness of attributions of those rational states. They both acknowledge a different, Chomskian sense of tacit knowledge, relative to which speakers might also be said to have tacit knowledge at the level of phrase-meaning somehow consistent with Gricean ascriptions at that level. But they would correctly reject taking the existence of Chomskian tacit knowledge as sufficient for ascribing to speakers Gricean tacit knowledge at the level of

phrase-meaning: “nothing in the Gricean framework requires a hearer to know a semantic theory of the speaker’s language in any ordinary sense of ‘know’. What is perhaps not implausible is that knowing a language involves the capacity to know *of* each sentence (within limits) what its semantic properties are” (Loar 1981, 252). “The common man ... need only have suitable particular expectations about how [his fellows] might act, and how they might form beliefs, in various situations. He can tell whether any actual or hypothetical particular action or belief-formation on their part is compatible with his expectations” (Lewis 1975, 180).

Lewis and Loar are right that the existence of Chomskian tacit knowledge is not sufficient to justify attributions of Gricean tacit knowledge of phrase-meaning; but, as we have seen in the first section, they are wrong in thinking that the vindication of the Gricean program does not need such an attribution in a properly justified form. What makes an account of linguistic meaning distinctively Gricean is that it is given in terms of speaker-meaning. What this amounts to is that it is given in terms of personal-level (as opposed to merely subpersonal-level) states: in terms of (self-supporting regularities involving) the rational purposive mental activity characteristic of human beings. Now, only a small finite subset of all logically possible utterances with a literal meaning in a typical natural language occur under some such (even if tacit) rational control; and, as we have seen, some utterances are consistently produced with what we want to count as a non-linguistic meaning. The Gricean project is doomed unless the appeal to knowledge of structure can be justified inside it.

What is needed is an appeal to unthematized knowledge of the conventional contribution of phrases, to acts of meaning, not just to tacit knowledge of the Chomskian variety. Such knowledge is constituted by personal-level psychological states, like those easily accessible in the form of CEO-thoughts, and unlike the Chomskian states of tacit knowledge; but, like the latter, it is only available after reflection heuristically of a scientific character, taking as data intuitions about the evaluation of utterances relative to several circumstances. As I said, I share with Recanati and others the view that some form of “first-personal availability” is thus required. However, the one attainable through the process of ordinary scientific-semantic theorizing is in my view quite enough. It also involves psychological processes, although not the sort of psychological process on which Recanati et al. focus: it requires us to evaluate our intuitions regarding the satisfaction or otherwise, of hypothesized truth-conditions of utterances, including the relevant expressions under different conceivable situations. I think that, ultimately, this is the source of the trouble. The writers whose views I have been discussing concentrate on, as it were, local psychological matters: the

semantic intuitions of competent speakers about concrete utterances. The Gricean picture encourages us to focus on more global issues: semantic intuitions of competent speakers concerning the systematic contribution of semantic units to different utterances in different contexts.

The account of the asymmetric semantics of descriptions and indexicals outlined before, would be validated by research which, looking for conventional regularities in use, took into account a sufficiently wide range of uses of those expressions. For, on the Gricean view, to get a proper account of the semantics of descriptions and indexicals what we have to do is to look for the simplest way of accounting for the contribution of those expressions to the utterances in which they regularly appear, along the Gricean guidelines described; i.e., on the assumption that they are systematically contributing to the form of rational activity explicated in Gricean accounts of speaker-meaning. This kind of research would highlight how infrequent descriptive uses of indexicals are, how indexicals are systematically used to make singular acts of meaning in a wide variety of linguistic contexts. It would also highlight the extent to which descriptions, even incomplete descriptions, are systematically used to make quantificational acts of meaning. A highly relevant argument would be the one that Kripke (1977) made popular, consisting in imagining whether uses, whose conventionality is in question, would equally arise in a language in which expressions had been explicitly stipulated to have the allegedly literal meaning.

I should stress that I am not denying the relevance of empirical, sub-personal facts for the determination of the semantics of a given language. On the contrary, I think that many fine-grained semantic facts can only be adjudicated on that basis; I am thinking, for instance, of facts about binding constraints. I am only arguing for the existence of personal-level facts, particularly facts concerning the not so fine-grained semantic structure of utterances, which are not easily available to ordinary speakers, and for their important role in semantic theorizing. Here the considerations of the first section are relevant. The Gricean is entitled to attribute states of unthematized knowledge concerning the linguistic meaning of phrases to ordinary speakers only if he abandons reductionist goals. It is not implausible to ascribe to ordinary speakers propositional attitudes about the meaning of phrases and how they contribute to the meaning of utterances, if we are entitled to use in characterizing them explicit references to the language which they use: “expression *X* means *M* in the language that I speak”.

The main reason to ascribe to ordinary speakers personal-level unthematized knowledge of the grammar of their language is methodological. We take pretheoretically to be a fact about language use, that literal use



of language is a form of rational activity, whose rationality reaches the conventional use of phrases; and, unless we have good reasons not to do so, our theories should integrate pretheoretical beliefs. One way in which we can bring this pretheoretical belief to the surface, is by reflecting on cases in which the rational expectations which account for why certain phrases are used, are not satisfied. There are well-known examples involving indexicals which we could mention for illustrative purposes.

Consider an utterance of ‘that is a picture of one of the greatest philosophers of the twentieth century’ made – as in a well known example by Kaplan – while pointing without turning and looking to the place on a wall which has been long occupied by a picture of Carnap, although, unbeknownst to the speaker, someone has replaced Carnap’s picture with one of Spiro Agnew. It seems accurate to say that, in cases like this, there are two sets of referential intentions which, against the speaker’s reasonable assumptions, come apart. There are his *ultimate* intention of referring to a picture with certain observable features which he believes to be on the wall and has been long there. As a competent user of English, the speaker also makes clear his intention to refer to the picture made salient by his demonstration, while uttering the relevant token of ‘that’; this is for him an *ancillary* intention subserving the former. Typically, the two sorts of intentions are present, even if we only notice them when, as in this case, they come apart. It is considerations such as these, which support the Gricean view that the conventional use of phrases and syntactic features is a form of rational activity. Competent speakers will acknowledge the mistake, with respect to a situation like the one we have described, and they will do it systematically, with respect to the demonstrative phrase, no matter what the other elements of the utterance are. The mistake, it seems to me, is the one we have articulated. To characterize it in those normative terms presupposes that speakers *know* that tokens of ‘that picture’ are conventionally used to refer to the most salient picture when the token is produced.

Alternative views do not provide a reasonable picture of these intuitions concerning language use. The main alternative in the literature, is to leave grammar to be determined by just what Chomskian grammar speakers have internalized: “For suppose there prevails in *P* a practice of meaning in *L* and that members of *P* are able to process utterances in *L* because their language processing involves an internally represented grammar of *L*. Intuitively, this would count as their using *L*, whether or not their processing of utterances of *L* also relied on the [Gricean]-required propositional attitudes. We can imagine people whose processing of *L* sentences uses an internally represented grammar of *L*, but who do not make the supersophisticated [Gricean]-required inferences. Perhaps these people

are so “programmed” that upon hearing an utterance of  $S$ , they believe straightway that the speaker meant  $p$ , when  $L(S) = p$ , unless that belief is defeated in one or another ways (e.g., by a further belief that the speaker was speaking metaphorically)” (Schiffer 1993, 242).<sup>19</sup> Later Schiffer even rejects the Chomskian requirement of an internally represented grammar, on the basis of his Harvey-example (Schiffer 1987, ch. 7), which suggest that we could even make do with less. I cannot see how a view such as this can account for the intuitive diagnosis of examples like the one discussed in the preceding paragraph.

This new alternative to the Gricean view also has naturalistic overtones. The Gricean view contends that using and comprehending language is a form of rational activity. It is usually unthematized; but it is still an activity “under rational control” (to use Lewis’ phrase), and this applies to structural matters, to matters having to do with how utterances express what the speaker means on the basis of its words and syntax. The alternative is to think of this as a merely natural process, something that happens to us without also constituting a form of rational activity. I say “merely” natural, because, I want to emphasize, for the Gricean the process is *also* natural; it might well be realized by a Chomskian system of linguistic competence, and as I said there in fact are good reasons to think so. The issue is whether or not it is *merely* natural.

Appreciating what is at stake is the extent to which linguistic activity is “under rational control”, Laurence (1996) devotes his main argument to questioning the following consequence he derives from the Gricean view: “Since language, on this view, is a rather direct reflection of general abilities to reason about one’s own mental states and the mental states of one’s conspecifics, we should expect the ability to use language to correlate strongly with these general capacities” (*ibid.*, 286). He then provides as counterexamples, cases of subjects without too much “general intelligence” but with strong “linguistic abilities”, and viceversa. “If language were a direct reflection of general abilities to reason about one’s own mental states and the mental states of others, we should expect the ability to use language to correlate strongly with these general communicative capacities. We would not expect radical discontinuities between linguistic and nonlinguistic use of what is physically *the same symbol*. The fact that it does not correlate and that such discontinuities exist, suggests that the ability to speak a language is not simply a reflection of general communicative or intellectual ability” (*ibid.*, 290–1). Perhaps this provides an empirical case against attempts to reductively account for knowledge of language in terms of “general abilities to reason”. The present non-reductionist view requires reflective capacities, and thus those general

abilities; but it is compatible with knowledge of language being dependent on a “domain-specific” cognitive module, and thus with the absence of correlation Laurence indicates.<sup>20</sup>

The main argument for the Gricean taxonomy is thus, that it provides the best account of the facts involving a lesser departure, from what we already take ourselves to know. I have suggested some reasons for thinking that there is more in the Gricean view than mere intellectualist prejudices. Freed from some aspects which do not seem to be essential to it, the traditional Gricean view regarding the pragmatic/semantic distinction is in a better shape than critics think. To the extent, then, that a form of the Gricean view like the one we have outlined here is well-supported, we can see the irrelevancy of the Wittgensteinian main consideration. As Grice insisted, the fact that meaning is ultimately use, should not lead us to confuse aspects of use which involve the conventional deployment of words and syntax for the sort of rational purpose captured in the Gricean accounts of speaker-meaning, with merely non-literal uses.

#### NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Neale (1992), however, offers a contrary estimate. (Later I will raise some doubts on its accuracy on aspects which I deem fundamental to the Gricean perspective.)

<sup>2</sup> Unlike tacit knowledge in the sense of Evans (1985) and Davies (1987), unthematized knowledge is meant to be first-personal – accessible by reflection to its subject. Unlike ordinary explicit knowledge, it is meant to be accessible only through a theoretically-driven abductive process whose “empirical” basis lies in semantic intuitions.

<sup>3</sup> Both distinctions, I will assume, come to much of the same.

<sup>4</sup> Considerations based on factors like conservativeness, simplicity, integration of knowledge and so on. Searle (1969, 55) makes this point.

<sup>5</sup> Millikan, for instance, “defines” conventions as follows: “To be thought of as conventional, a reproduced pattern must be perceived as proliferated, due, in part, to the weight of precedent, not to its intrinsically superior capacity to produce a desired result, or due, say, to ignorance of any alternatives” (p. 166). This vague characterization does not have many claims to having attained the normative goal of a philosophical explication. It raises all sort of questions, which the paper does not answer: ‘Thought of’, by whom? How sensibly? Must the required reproduction of patterns have a psychological explication? Is a merely biological explanation sufficient, or even just a physical one? In what respects (physical, biological, psychological, etc.) are “precedents” supposed to have “weight”? These doubts

aside, the definition does suggest that there is no more to say about conventions than that they are regularities having a historical, but contingent explanation. Unless this is clarified further, however, digestion will turn out to be a convention. The main question for me is whether such a clarification will not in the end entail that conventions are distinctively constituted by actions having as their rational foundations certain preferences, together with expectations of conformity by others.

<sup>6</sup> Ultimately, Schiffer's views might have been in agreement with this; for in his account of explicit performatives (pp. 104–10), he contends that they are assertoric “in logical form”, but they are not uttered with their “full conventional force”. The import of this is unclear to me.

<sup>7</sup> This weak form of ascribing conceptual priority to speaker-meaning with respect to expression-meaning suffices to support Strawson (1964) Gricean criticism of Austin's (1962) account of illocutionary force. Strawson's point was that some illocutionary acts – including some with claims to be counted as paradigm cases like informing and enjoining – can be performed without using a conventional device for it. To subscribe this contention we only need the priority claim embodied in contentions (i)–(ii).

<sup>8</sup> The main theses of the paper are thus very much along the lines of the middle way defended by Davies (forthcoming). Incidentally, the realization of the unsurmountable difficulties which the folk-psychological variety of reductionism confronts, together with the persistence of the reductionist goals, might perhaps account for the later development of Schiffer's views.

<sup>9</sup> See, for instance, Schiffer 1987, 245–7, and Lance and O'Leary-Hawthorne 1997, 290–4, for a summary of usual criticisms. It is fair to assume that the later authors take the objections they mention as the most damaging. The fact that all of them have proper responses inside the present framework, invalidates their claim that the Gricean research programme is a degenerating one.

<sup>10</sup> In fact, I think this follows from a deeper metaphysical fact about event-individuation: whenever we mention events in explanations, it is events-as-instantiating-relevant-properties that we are mentioning.

<sup>11</sup> Similar considerations dispose of an objection by Schiffer to a view close to the one I am propounding here, that – given such a Gricean account – it would (absurdly) not be possible for a speaker to mean what we would take him to mean by “*writing* the sentence ‘I cannot write a sentence that contains more than three words’ (Schiffer 1987, 261).

<sup>12</sup> Blackburn voices another common objection to Gricean accounts when he argues: “If I have to gesture or mime or otherwise invent a performance I must hope that you appreciate why I am doing it. But once we have methods of communicating into which we have been trained, perhaps I need not care at all if you recognize my intention in uttering. It would be enough if you heard my words, because you will have been trained to take them in a certain way, and so taking them, you will understand me” (Blackburn 1984, 113). The present view is that Blackburn is not setting up any genuine alternative here. For the point of the training is precisely that the hearer appreciates why the speaker is acting as he is; and, if the speaker is not irrational, he must care (albeit not explicitly) that it be recognized.

<sup>13</sup> See García-Carpintero (1998) for more detail. The asymmetry is further developed in my “The Real Distinction between Descriptions and Indexicals”, unpublished manuscript

<sup>14</sup> I develop this idea in García-Carpintero (forthcoming).

<sup>15</sup> For instance, although I take some descriptive material to be part of the *linguistic content* of an utterance of ‘he is angry’, I disagree with Bezuidenhout's (1996) contention that descriptive material is part of *what is said* – which she attempts to sustain in part by

appealing to the Wittgensteinian line I am going to oppose. Regarding the truth conditions of such utterances, I take a straightforward Direct Reference view.

<sup>16</sup> What if the context is not felicitous, and there is no unique salient individual? For the related case of the domain of discourse, Gauker (1997) relies on an example of this kind to raise trouble for “expressivist” theories of communication – which certainly include the one I am assuming here. In Gauker’s example, a speaker utters ‘all of the red ones are mine’, in a context in which (we might assume) there are two different but equally salient domains of quantification, one which the speaker has in mind and with respect to which his utterance is true, and another which the hearer has in mind and with respect to which the utterance is false. We can easily describe similar cases for all expressions discussed in this paper. In my view, the best strategy is to think of them as cases of Field’s (1973) *partial reference*, giving them a supervaluationist rendering in our formal treatment. This corresponds to what Gauker describes as a “neutral solution”. I lack the space here to dispose of Gauker’s criticism of this type of response.

<sup>17</sup> Carston does attempt to provide an alternative account of implicated contents, appealing to Sperber and Wilson’s “Relevance Theory”. I do not think that this offers any real advantage to Grice’s account; and, in any event, I do not think that the relevance account motivates Carston’s principle (or Recanati’s, for that matter) any better than Grice’s.

<sup>18</sup> Nunberg has a second argument against the “implicature” analysis of descriptive uses of indexicals. If this analysis were correct, he claims, we should expect that the same readings would be available for sentences in which the relevant indexicals have been replaced by proper names or descriptions with the same reference (Nunberg 1993, 14–5, 21 and 32). This is a quite demanding application of Grice’s “non-detachability” requirement. However, as Grice stressed, such a requirement only applies in so far as “the manner of expression plays no role in the calculation” (Grice 1975, 39; see also Grice 1978, 43). The examples at stake do not satisfy this condition, for the non-literal meaning is in part derived with the essential help of the token-reflexive semantic rule associated with indexicals’ types.

<sup>19</sup> Laurence (1996) defends a similar view: “According to [the Chomskian] view utterances have the linguistic properties they do in virtue of being associated, in the course of language processing, with mental representations having those properties . . . *it is in virtue of being associated, in language processing, with these representations that an utterance has the linguistic properties it has*” (Laurence 1996, 283–4).

<sup>20</sup> Laurence seems to assume that his examples of subjects with the “linguistic module” intact but severely limited general intellectual abilities are examples of subjects with “normal linguistic abilities” (p. 287). If this means that the orders, assertions and so on that these subjects make are “normal linguistic utterances”, it does contradict the Gricean view; but I find the suggestion absurd. (I do not suppose the narratives of these subjects would pass muster in court.)

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