

Can Uses of Language in Thought Provide Linguistic Evidence?

draft – preprint version

1. Speaks's test

In this article I focus on the argument that Jeff Speaks develops in Speaks (2008). There, Speaks distinguishes between uses of language in conversation and uses of language in thought. Speaks's argument is that a phenomenon that appears both when using language in communication and when using language in thought cannot be explained in Gricean conversational terms. A Gricean account of implicature involves having very complicated beliefs about the audience, which turn out to be extremely bizarre if the speaker is her own and only audience. Therefore, it is extremely implausible that we implicate anything when using language in thought. So, an episode of using language in thought needs to be explained in some other way. This article is an attempt to clarify the notion of a use of language in thought, and ultimately to argue that there are no uses of language that satisfy all the conditions that are needed for Speaks's argument to work.

Although Speaks does not spend much time in clarifying the concept of a use of language in thought, he seems to have in mind uses of language that intuitively belong to the category of talking to oneself, cases where 'there is no audience-directed intention at all' (Schiffer 1972: 76), and solitary uses of language (a characterization suggested to me by François Recanati); these are also cases of uttering a sentence, either thinking out loud, or 'silent thinking' (Grice 1989: 112-3), the latter being "'internal" assertions or judgments, conscious voluntary episodic acts performed by "saying in one's heart" or inwardly accepting an aural mental image of a sentence.' (García-Carpintero

2009: 80). The above characterizations of the use of language in thought get at some of its essential features, but should be further developed into an analysis of the concept.¹ I will come back later to the discussion of such a possible analysis.

Speaks argues that a linguistic phenomenon that is present both with uses of language in communication and with uses of language in thought cannot be explained in Gricean conversational terms. The general argument can be reformulated as follows:

1. Consider a phenomenon that is present both when using language in thought and when using language in conversation.
2. Given that it is the same phenomenon, a unitary account is needed.
3. It is impossible to implicate anything in thought.
4. Therefore, a Gricean conversational account (which involves implicature) is not acceptable for that phenomenon.

Speaks offers the conclusion of the argument in the form of a principle, which he calls the Communication/Implicature Principle: ‘The fact that a sentence S may be used in conversation to communicate (convey, assert) p can be explained as a conversational implicature only if S cannot be used by an agent in thought to judge (think) p.’ (Speaks 2008: 113)

He applies this argumentative strategy to quantifier domain restriction. This is the phenomenon of uttering ‘Every bottle is empty’ and meaning that *every bottle in the apartment is empty*. This phenomenon, Speaks observes, is present both in communication and in thought. I can use the sentence ‘Every bottle is empty’ to convey in communication that every bottle in the apartment

¹ This concept of use of language in thought is in no obvious way connected to the Language of Thought hypothesis, as developed by Gilbert Harman, Jerry Fodor and others.

is empty; and I can use the same sentence in thought, to entertain the same proposition. If the phenomenon is present both in thought and in communication, a unitary account is needed. But in thought no implicature can be generated. According to Grice (1989: 25), implicature generation requires that the proposition implicated be derivable, but we cannot make sense of the process of implicature derivation with uses of language in thought. Speaks considers the hypothesis that quantifier domain restriction is to be explained as follows: when I utter ‘Every bottle is empty’ meaning that *every bottle in the apartment is empty*, I assert that *every (unrestricted) bottle is empty* and I implicate that *every bottle in the apartment is empty*. He then wonders:

Is it really the case that I manage to use this sentence to say to myself that every bottle in the apartment is empty only because I think that I am capable of working out that the assumption that I believe this is needed to make my utterance to myself consistent with the norms of conversation and, further, think that I know that I am capable of working out that I think this? Even if I could have these strange beliefs on an occasion, it hardly seems that they are required for me to use ‘Every bottle is empty’ in thought to mean that every bottle in the apartment is empty. (Speaks 2008: 109)²

² According to Grice (1989: 31) calculability is a necessary condition for an implicature to be conversational. But Grice is not involved in the project of explaining the psychology of interpreters, as Saul (2002) argues. However, Speaks formulates the argument as if it rested on the implausibility of a certain interpretive strategy. But someone could reply that I may implicate something when I use language in thought even if it is highly implausible that I ever get at the implicature by way of such a derivation. The implausibility of a certain interpretive strategy does not entail non-calculability. But Speaks’s point remains valid, because the impossibility of having the kind of intentions that the derivation scheme requires makes the calculability requirement impossible to fulfil in thought.

Speaks's point is that it is extremely implausible that, when I am the only intended audience, I ever form the complex and bizarre intentions that the derivation of implicatures requires that I have.³ He concludes that quantifier domain restriction is not to be explained by Gricean pragmatics. The argument does not rule out non-conversational pragmatic accounts of quantifier domain restriction or other linguistic phenomena (Speaks 2008: 109). Kent Bach's notion of *implicature*, which involves completion and expansion of a propositional radical, or François Recanati's cognitive account of *primary pragmatic processes* involving modulation are just two such possible pragmatic explanations that are explicitly differentiated from implicature generation.

The above argument concerns *symmetric* phenomena, which are present both in thought and in conversation. Speaks suggests a further argument concerning *asymmetric* phenomena, which are present exclusively in communication, and have no counterpart in thought:

1. Consider a phenomenon that is present exclusively when using language in conversation, and not when using language in thought.
2. An account of the phenomenon must explain why the phenomenon is not present in thought.
3. It is impossible to implicate anything in thought.
4. Therefore, a Gricean conversational account is preferable for that

³ Another problem that I see for the possibility of implicating anything when talking to oneself is that it is not clear that the Cooperative Principle makes any sense in those cases. And if CP is the reason behind the maxims, these maxims lose their justification in non-conversational settings. On the one hand, CP makes reference to a conversation; on the other, even if it makes sense to speak of having a conversation 'with myself', it does not seem to make much sense to ask whether I am being cooperative or not when I am doing something on my own. Gunnar Björnsson suggested to me in conversation that there is a sense in which I could be uncooperative even when I act on my own. I may sometimes be 'in two minds', pursuing different aims that pull me in opposite directions, and so I may be acting in ways that obstruct other intentions I may have. However, I perceive this use of 'being cooperative' as rather metaphoric.

phenomenon.

Asymmetric phenomena not only can but also should be explained in Gricean terms, given that a conversational account also explains why the phenomenon is asymmetric: conversational phenomena are exploitations of the maxims that govern communication, and which have no counterpart with usage of language in thought. Speaks uses this latter argument with asymmetric cases of uses of language. He considers the famous case of a professor writing a recommendation letter and using ‘The student has excellent penmanship’ to communicate the proposition that the student is not good at philosophy. But a corresponding use in thought is not possible. In thought, someone can use this sentence in this way only if one has ‘already made the judgement, or entertained the thought, that the student is not a very good candidate. The use of “The student has excellent penmanship” cannot itself be a way of making this judgement, or thinking this thought.’ (Speaks 2008: 112-3) If this is so, then the phenomenon described is asymmetric, and specific to communication. According to the second of the two arguments presented above, a Gricean explanation is appropriate.

The two arguments taken together form a test for determining whether a conversational account of a certain phenomenon is preferable or, on the contrary, unacceptable. Speaks applies this test not only to quantifier domain restriction, but to referential uses of definite descriptions as well. He claims that they are present when using language in communication but not when using language in thought. Definite descriptions exhibit an asymmetry in the sense mentioned above, and so, they should be accounted for in Gricean terms. He also considers conversational accounts of Frege’s puzzle about proper names, as well as pragmatic accounts of metaphors. His discussion of

metaphors is rather complex (see Speaks 2008: 116, fn. 8).

2. A definition of a use of language in thought

I will not discuss here the conclusions that Speaks draws from applying his test to different linguistic phenomena. I will rather focus on the key concept in Speaks's argument, which is that of a use of language in thought. An approximation to a characterization of a use of language in thought can be arrived at following Speaks's characterization of the concept. Thus, a use of language in thought is a case of entertaining a thought or making a judgment that involves the utterance (or, in some way, the production of) a token of a linguistic expression such that:

- (i) the subject means something by her utterance;
- (ii) the subject does not intend to address any audience (other than herself);
- (iii) the utterance of the expression leads the subject to make a judgment or think a thought.

The reason for introducing (i) is that Speaks explicitly characterizes uses of language in thought as cases in which speakers mean something by their words.⁴ And indeed, when I say to myself, for instance, 'Every bottle is empty', and entertain the thought that every bottle in the apartment is empty, I am not merely uttering words and then interpreting them, but I mean something by the utterance. Condition (iii) is suggested in the following passage: 'Just as certain sorts of acts can only be performed by uses of language in communication, so certain sorts of acts can only be performed by uses of language in thought; by using a sentence in thought, an agent can

⁴ See the last sentence in the fragment quoted above from (Speaks 2008: 109).

make a judgment or think a thought.’ (Speaks 2008: 112, my emphasis) I have changed ‘can make a judgment’ into ‘leads the subject to make a judgment’ in (iii), and thus moved away from Speaks’s characterization of a use of language in thought. The reason is that, on the one hand, it is important for the purposes of Speaks’s test that the use of the expression play a causal role in actually getting the subject to make a judgment, not only that it be possible to have this outcome (whatever this possibility may be). So even if the definition is more restrictive than the one Speaks suggests, it is surely the definition of the kind of uses of language relevant for his test. On the other hand, the claim that the expression can be used to entertain a thought, as opposed to actually being used that way, seems to be trivially true, given that it does not seem that there is a class of sentential expressions that in principle could not be used to entertain thoughts. Concerning condition (ii), a reason for introducing it is that Speaks characterizes this use in various places as a case of saying something to myself, or talking to myself, or thinking to myself.⁵ However, leaving aside any technical sense of ‘use of language in thought’, it is not clear that (ii) is intuitively a necessary condition for thinking out loud. It seems that one can think out loud in a conversation as well, or at least, that there is some use of language in the vicinity of thinking out loud for which only (i) and (iii) are necessary conditions. That is, conveying something in conversation does not require that the content one wants to convey be in one’s mind before one starts talking. This suggests that the distinction that Speaks proposes, between uses of language in thought and uses of language in conversation, should be replaced by two different distinctions: using language in conversation (i.e. addressing an audience) as opposed to solitary uses of language (i.e. where

⁵ For the latter see (Speaks 2008: 116). For ‘saying to myself’ see the passage quoted above from (Speaks 2008: 109).

there is no audience); and using language to make a judgment (i.e. a judgment that was not actively entertained previous to the utterance), as opposed to using language to express or convey a thought that one actively entertained previous to the utterance. Nevertheless, for the purpose of Speaks's test it is desirable to focus on episodes where language is used to make judgments, and which take place outside conversation. Speaks's test relies on intuitions about whether a particular sentence could be used in a particular context to form a particular judgment. Whether a sentence can or cannot be used to make a judgment in a certain context is independent of whether its use for that purpose is part of a conversation or not. So, for the purposes of the test, one can completely ignore uses of language in conversation, and focus only on solitary uses of language. The advantage of focusing on solitary uses is that in conversation we have various purposes that we try to achieve by making assertions, and which are not present with solitary uses of language. To give just one example, in thought I may refer to a particular window that I have in mind with 'that window'; but in conversation, if I want the audience to identify a particular window in the environment, I usually need to give more descriptive information, except when that particular window has been referred to before in the conversation or was made salient in some other way. Communicative success depends on the fulfilment of certain conditions that are independent of whether language is used to make judgments or not, and which are specific to the interpretation of utterances.⁶ Condition (ii) eliminates all the requirements that are specific to success in conversational settings and selects those uses of language that are only vehicles of getting the subject to entertain a thought. So, for methodological reasons, it seems desirable to focus

⁶ As Stanley (2005: 140) puts it, 'There are no felicity conditions governing expressions in the language of thought (if such there be).' The same seems to be true for uses of language in thought.

on solitary uses of language, and to add (ii) as a condition on what counts as a use of language in thought in the sense relevant for Speaks's test. However, the argument that I will defend later does not depend on whether (ii) is a condition on uses of language in thought or not.

3. Some cases of use of language in thought

I turn now to a search for cases of uses of language that may intuitively fall under the definition proposed above.⁷ The purpose of this is to get a better grasp of what episodes of using language fulfil the three conditions, as opposed to those that are closely related but do not.

(a) First, condition (ii) is not fulfilled by cases in which I am *de facto* the only audience, although I intend to talk to an audience different from myself. Thus, I may hallucinate that there is an audience different from myself that I am addressing; or, I may be simply mistaken in believing that there is one, given that I have not noticed that the phone connection was lost, or that the audience has left the room; or, simply, the audience is present physically, but not listening at all, being completely absent-minded. These cases are not relevant for Speaks's test because in all these cases I can implicate that *q* by saying that *p*, although no one is present (or no one present is an audience), because having the intentions that the derivation of the implicature requires does not depend on the actual existence of an audience, only on my belief that there is an audience that I take to be cooperative.

(b) Cases of writing in a diary (and similar ones) with the purpose of

⁷ My classification only partially coincides with the ones various authors propose, such as Grice (see his 1989: 113), Schiffer (see his 1972: 76-89), Speaks (see his 2003: 30). This is partly because my attempt is motivated by different concerns than theirs, which is to find and discuss counterexamples to Grice's analysis of meaning.

reading it later myself (and no one else) fails on condition (ii). The audience that I am addressing is myself, but not my present self. Grice puts such cases under the heading ‘[u]tterances for which the utterer thinks there may (now or later) be an audience.’ (Grice 1989: 113) The case is similar in a relevant respect to a conversation, as the reader does not have privileged access to the writer’s intentions, and so the reader sometimes needs to discover these intentions in an indirect way, making use of the details of the context and of background knowledge that the reader has about the writer. The writer may exploit this common knowledge to implicate certain things.⁸

(c) Cases of imagining or pretending that I am in a conversational setting, although I am not, are cases in which (ii) is not fulfilled. Grice thinks of them as ‘[u]tterances which the utterer knows not to be addressed to any actual audience, but which the utterer pretends to address to some particular person or type of person’ (Grice 1989: 113). Schiffer imagines a sadistic lieutenant who, while alone, takes delight in saying aloud ‘Private Goodfellow, run your bayonet through your abdomen and look sharp about it!’ (Schiffer 1972: 78) He would not do it in the presence of Goodfellow, because the private might just obey the order, but enjoys imagining the scene. Cases of talking to my invisible friend, talking to pets, to the babies, or to the dead, are also forms of pretending that, or of acting as if, there is an audience different from myself. These cases do not fulfill condition (ii) because, although there is no audience other than myself, I am acting as if there was such an audience. My actions can only be made sense of if I am assumed to be pretending to talk

⁸ I consequently also disagree with Speaks (2003) when he claims that diary entries are a counterexample to Grice’s analysis of meaning precisely because, he claims, I cannot have the complex intentions that the analysis requires: ‘Are we to say that by writing something in my diary I intend to bring about a certain belief in myself by recognition of this (my own) intention? I already know that I have the relevant belief.’ (Speaks 2003: 30) But in writing in a diary I may be writing for my future self, and of course, I know that in the future I will not have privileged access to my present intentions. That may be the reason, after all, why I am writing the diary. Class notes and shopping lists are similar in this respect.

to someone. I am, in a sense, addressing an imagined audience, to which I may try even to implicate something.

(d) Cases which Grice explicitly considers different from the above are those where ‘verbal thoughts merely pass through my head as distinct from being “framed” by me’ (Grice 1989: 113). With respect to them, Grice writes that it is inappropriate to say that the subject has meant something by producing those words. These cases do not fulfil condition (i), and are clearly not the kind of uses we are looking for. Indeed, when I dream of meeting Quine and listening to what he says, or of reading from a book a sentence, or when a line from a poem comes to my mind involuntarily, that is not the result of an intention to use those words in order to achieve a certain end. Grice points out that in these cases we are more like listeners than like speakers. Indeed, it happens to me that those words feature in my mental life in some way.

(e) Similar cases in which (i) is not satisfied are those in which someone retrieves from the memory a sentence or a formula with the purpose of decoding the content it expresses. Suppose I wonder what exactly the Pythagorean theorem says; for that purpose, I may retrieve its formula from my memory, say it to myself, or write it down, and then think it through. This may help me entertain the theorem, so (iii) seems to be fulfilled, and so does (ii). However, it fails to satisfy (i), because in writing down on paper out of memory ‘ $a^2 + b^2 = c^2$ ’ I do not mean that $a^2 + b^2 = c^2$ (where ‘c’ stands for the length of the hypotenuse of a right triangle, and ‘a’ and ‘b’ for the lengths of the two other sides). Uttering the formula or writing it down is not yet meaning anything, but merely retrieving the words from memory, which is similar in the relevant respect to copying the formula out of a math book. I do intend to reproduce the exact formula, but I do not mean the content of the

theorem by my utterance, because I do not yet entertain that content. The process of (re)producing a sentence out of memory and then interpreting it may be aimed at (re)discovering what the sentence literally expresses (as in the above case), or what the speaker meant by a certain utterance of that sentence. Suppose I doubt whether my friend was happy or not about the birthday present I gave her: I first think what were her exact words, and I remember that she said ‘I also sometimes give the books that I like as birthday presents.’ I may then go on to think whether she meant that it was not nice of me to buy her the books that I like (instead of considering her own taste), or whether she meant it was nice of me to do that (instead of buying her some book I don’t like or I haven’t read).

(f) The use of ‘Every bottle is empty’ that Speaks discusses is distinct from all the above cases, and not reducible to them. Cases such as this one are of the kind that Grice calls ‘silent thinking’, although the silent aspect is not essential. Cases of thinking out loud, in which the speech is overt, belong to the same kind of episodes of thinking in which phenomenologically language figures explicitly. I use in what follows ‘thinking out loud’ as interchangeable with ‘use of language in thought’, to refer to all cases in which language is used in thought in the sense defined above and described here, both cases in which the utterance of the sentence is loud and cases in which ‘an aural mental image of a sentence’ (García-Carpintero 2009: 2) is somehow produced.

All these uses are, according to Grice, such that ‘the utterer neither thinks it possible that there be an actual audience nor imagines himself as addressing an audience’ (Grice 1989: 113). That is to say, they are different from above cases of type (a), (b) and (c).⁹ They are also different from cases

⁹ I cannot agree with Grice’s further characterization of these cases as being such that the speaker ‘nevertheless intends his utterance to be such that it would induce a certain sort of response in a certain

(d) or (e) because intuitively it cannot be denied that I mean something by the sentence I utter. To consider an example along the same line with the ones Speaks gives, suppose I suddenly notice that it is 16:10 and that I am late for the meeting, and I utter spontaneously ‘It’s already 16:10!’ Such cases intuitively fulfil (i) to (iii). That in some such cases condition (i) is fulfilled is shown by the fact that, if asked ‘why did you say “already”?’ I can easily explain what I meant by that, namely, that is too late to arrive in time for the meeting. But not only such spontaneous isolated utterances fulfil the three conditions. An utterance may be part of a more complex process that involves various steps, such as calculating, making inferences in a chain, making a plan for a holiday trip, imagining a story etc. In some of these cases the utterance is less spontaneous and more predictable, compared to the cases discussed above in which just one isolated thought pops up in one’s mind. Where there is such a chain of thoughts organized according to some rules, taking the next step in the calculation (respectively, drawing the next inference, deciding the next destination along the way, deciding what happens next in the story) is constrained by the previous steps and by the rules of the activity undergone. However, these utterances are still spontaneous in a sense that I will discuss later. What is important for our purposes here is that these cases are good candidates for use of language in thought. The language is used to make

perhaps indefinite kind of audience were it the case that such an audience was present.’ (Grice 1989: 113) If having this intention is part of the *prima facie* description of the kind of cases that constitute silent thinking, then I doubt we can easily identify such cases. Grice attempts here to show that silent thinking, which he classifies as different than type (c) cases, can be reconstructed in a way that would avoid that it be a counterexample to his analysis of speaker meaning. But the reconstruction is hard to accept for the following reason: if Grice admits that the speaker does not think it to be possible that there be an actual audience, it is not clear that it is rational for her to have the intention to produce a certain effect, where there is no such audience. It may be true that speakers have the belief that if a certain kind of audience were present, the utterance would have a certain effect on it. It is also plausible that we have (usually, non-occurrent) beliefs with similar conditional contents that accompany most of our acts, e.g., when I open the door I have the belief that if there is someone on the other side, I may hit her with the door. But it is less plausible that one can act on an intention with that conditional content when one also has the belief that the antecedent is false.

judgments, and, when one is not addressing any audience, they seem to fulfil the three conditions.

One last thing to mention is that the endorsement of the proposition entertained is not essential for a mental episode to be of the kind of using language in thought. Even if in many cases of thinking out loud the subject indeed makes a judgment (i.e., she endorses the thoughts she forms), thinking out loud needs not lead to endorsing the thought. The subject may only come up with a hypothesis, ask herself a question, make a formal derivation from premises that she knows to be false. In all these cases the subject is not endorsing the thought, but only entertains the outcome of the thinking process. Condition (iii) is fulfilled in these cases as well, because it requires that the subject make a judgment or entertain a thought. Actually, it is not relevant for the purposes of our discussion whether the subject endorses the thought she has made or entertains it without endorsing it.

4. An argument against alleged uses of language in thought

Here is a simple argument against the claim that cases of type (f), which seem to get closest to being the kind of use of language in thought that Speaks's test relies on, are actually instances of this use of language. The argument purports to show that no use of language can fulfil conditions (i) and (iii) simultaneously. The argument is the following: if a use of language fulfils condition (i), then the speaker means something by the words she uses. But meaning that p is an intentional action, and so the speaker has an intention about the content p . If I mean that p , then the thought that p will help me choose my words to utter. Which means that I cannot arrive at the thought that p via the utterance of s . Here is a detailed version of the argument.

1. According to (i), the speaker utters *s* meaning that, say, *p*.
2. If the speaker means that *p* in uttering *s*, then the utterance is the realization of an intention to Φ that *p*.
3. If an action is the realization of an intention, then the intention guides the action (in particular, the choice of the sentence to utter).
4. If an intention guides an action, then the content of the intention is available to the subject performing the action.
5. Therefore the subject entertains *p* independently of uttering the sentence (and just by intending to do so).
6. Therefore, uttering *s* cannot play a causal role in getting the subject to entertain *p*.
7. According to (iii), uttering *s* plays a causal role in getting the subject to entertain *p*.¹⁰
8. Therefore, condition (i) and (iii) cannot be fulfilled simultaneously.

Some observations are needed before I go on to consider a number of possible objections. Meaning something by uttering a sentence is not something that happens to someone, but it is something that the subject does. It is an intentional action, as it is within the subject's rational control both what sentence to utter and what proposition to mean by uttering it. That is why speaker-meaning must be accounted for in personal-level terms, in terms of propositional attitudes and inferences, and not in terms of causal processes. Moreover, the account must include a rational reconstruction of the speaker's intentions. This point is independent of whether a Gricean-style analysis of

¹⁰ Galen Strawson suggests a similar argument when he writes that in the cases of thinking, 'which particular content it is [that we are thinking] is not intentionally controlled; it is not a matter of action. It cannot be a matter of action unless the content is already there, available for consideration and adoption for intentional production. But if it is already there to be considered and adopted it must already have "just come" at some previous time in order to be so available. . . ' (Strawson 2003: 235)

speaker-meaning in terms of the speaker's intentions is correct or not. However, the argument does rest on the claim that speaker-meaning that p in uttering s entails having intentions about p . It is not relevant what exactly is the content of the intention, and so, the intention is not specified with respect to the value of ' Φ '. If Grice's analysis of speaker-meaning is correct, then the intention to Φ that p is the intention to get the audience (whatever counts as audience in these cases) to believe p when s is a declarative sentence; in Neale's (1992: 550) version it is the intention to get the audience to actively entertain the thought that p . These analyses introduce further intentions that speakers have when they mean that p in uttering s , but it is sufficient for accepting (2) that all these analyses introduce one intention of this form. Premise (2) does not commit one to a particular analysis of speaker-meaning, and it also does not commit one to there being any successful analysis of speaker-meaning at all. It only says that whenever a speaker utters a sentence s meaning that p she has an intention with a content of the form ' Φ that p ', even if there is no unique value of ' Φ ' for all cases of speaker-meaning that p in uttering s . On the other hand, if one rejects premise (2) one also has to give up the project of looking for an analysis of speaker-meaning in terms of speaker's intentions. This is *prima facie* a point in favour of (2), at least among those who defend such analyses. Moreover, intuitively cases of thinking out loud take place in conversation as well. So, if one wants to deny that they are the realization of an intention, then one has to admit that many cases of solitary use of language, as well as many cases of use of language in conversation, are not intentional uses of language.¹¹ Another point in favour of

¹¹ Kent Bach suggested to me in conversation that one could give a simple reply to Speaks's argument, namely, that there are no uses of language in thought, in the intended sense, because the subject cannot mean anything when there is no audience whatsoever, as she cannot have the required intentions. But this is not obviously so. On the contrary, many authors admit that some of these cases are at least *prima facie*

(2) is that it is compatible with the claim that speaker-meaning may be a result of habit,¹² and with holding that the intention that involves *p* is not always conscious. García-Carpintero (2001: 120) argues that rational reconstruction needs not postulate conscious, explicit and occurrent beliefs.

I will focus now on some possible objections to the argument, and how they can be dealt with. Premises (1) and (7) entail that whatever the speaker means by uttering *s*, that is the thought that she gets to entertain as a result of that utterance. It can be objected that conditions (i) to (iii) of the definition of the use of language in thought do not entail that the utterance of a sentence in thought leads to entertaining the same proposition *p* that the speaker means by that utterance. (iii) only requires that an outcome of uttering *s* has to be the thinking of a thought. However, a reason to think that the speaker means by the utterance of *s* precisely the thought that she entertains or the judgments that she makes in that particular episode of thinking out loud is that we do expect to get the same answer when we ask a speaker ‘What do you mean by *s*?’ and when we ask ‘What were you thinking when you said *s*?’, with respect to the same episode of thinking out loud (assuming that the last question inquires for the judgment made, i.e. for what is required for the utterance to fulfil (iii)). On the other hand, it cannot be denied that there are cases in which someone utters *s* meaning that *p*, which leads her to think that *q*. I may be wondering whether anybody ever long-jumped over 28 feet, and say to myself ‘Bob Beamon long-jumped over 29 feet way back in 1968.’¹³ By saying this I

counterexamples to Grice’s analysis of meaning precisely because they seem to be cases in which the subject means something by her utterance. See Grice (1989: 112-3), Schiffer (1972: 76-80), Harman (1977: 422), Vlach (1981: 384-6), Speaks (2003: 29-31) and Speaks (2008: 109, fn. 3).

¹² As David Lewis famously pointed out, ‘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 or 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.’ (Lewis 1975: 148)

¹³ This example is a modification of the one given in Bach (2005: 5).

may get to think that somebody jumped over 28 feet. Or I can say to myself ‘It’s very hot today’, which may lead me to realize that I forgot to pick up my sunglasses this morning when I left home. If these are episodes of thinking out loud of which (1) and (7) are not simultaneously true, then they are cases to which the conclusion of the argument does not apply. However, I think the argument applies to these cases as well. The former case is one of drawing an inference, in particular, an existential generalization. In the latter case, a psychological association has taken place, which led from one thought to another. In both cases I entertain two thoughts, the thinking of the former leading to the thinking of the latter. The judgment made in uttering *s*, as mentioned in (iii), is the first, and not the second, in both cases. The entertaining of the second thought is due to a posterior mental episode of drawing an inference, and making a psychological association, respectively. One reason for this diagnosis is that there are two separate mental events, not just one, the second being caused by the first. If not one, but a chain of inferences or psychological associations is made, we are not tempted to say that only one episode has taken place, an episode of uttering *s* meaning that *p* and judging that *q*, *r*, *t*, etc. The episode of thinking out loud is that of uttering *s* meaning that *p* and entertaining *p*. Actually, Speaks explicitly rules out cases in which a speaker entertains *p* as a result of uttering *s*, and infers that *q* from *p* and some other proposition entertained in the context (Speaks 2008: 119, fn. 10).

Another reason why we should not want to treat the above cases as instances of uttering *s* meaning that *p* and judging that *q* is that if an utterance of ‘It’s very hot today’ could be used in thought to think that I forgot to pick up my sunglasses, then there is no limit to what thoughts one can think by uttering any sentence whatsoever. If any sentence can be used to entertain

virtually any thought, then there are no asymmetric phenomena of the kind that are present with uses of language in conversation but not in thought, and for which, according to Speaks's test, a Gricean conversational account fits best. In particular, if this is so then there are no conversational implicatures. Of course, Speaks does not want his argument to generate this conclusion, and so the use of language in thought that Speaks has in mind is such that the proposition meant by uttering s is the proposition entertained, and not some other proposition in some way related to it.

I turn now to an objection that targets premise (7). Matthew Soteriou argues that there is a kind of thinking out loud that is not to be analysed as having two components, the thinking of p and the uttering of s :

In the case of thinking out loud, say, calculating whether p out loud, it seems wrong to think of the out-loud utterances as overt actions that merely accompany, and that are separable from, the real mental activity of calculating whether p . . . In the case of thinking out loud, I suggest we should regard the overt bodily action of speaking out loud as a vehicle of the mental action, and not as a separable action that merely accompanies the mental action. (Soteriou 2009: 241)

Soteriou admits that there are cases of calculating without saying anything out loud, and also cases in which one says out loud something that one thought of previously. But his proposal is that there is a third type of action which instantiates 'a basic, non-reducible type, that we might call *mental action with an overt-bodily-action vehicle* (in this case, calculating whether p out loud) . . . So an event of one's verbal utterance can instantiate two types of act – one's saying that p out loud, and one's judging that p , because it instantiates a third basic, non-reducible type of act, namely one's judging that p out loud.'

(Soteriou 2009: 241) If Soteriou is right, then premise (7) is false: thinking out loud is not to be analysed as a combination of an episode of uttering *s*, which then leads to a different mental event of entertaining *p*. Instead, there is just one mental episode of thinking out loud that *p*. This amounts to denying that (iii) is a condition for using language in thought, because according to (iii) the utterance of the expression causes the event of judging or thinking a proposition.

Moreover, a similar line of thought may lead to denying premise (2): it may be held that, although meaning that *p* by uttering *s* is an intentional action, there is no separate mental episode of intending to Φ that *p* by uttering *s*, which then causes or guides the uttering of *s*. This point is in line with the view that the intention with which an action is performed is part of the description of the action, and not a separate mental state. According to G.E.M. Anscombe, the intention is a constitutive element of the action, conceptually inseparable from it. She writes that it is a ‘mistake [. . .] to think that the relation being done in execution of a certain intention, or being done intentionally, is a causal relation between act and intention [. . .] [I]ntention does not have to be a distinct psychological state which exists either prior to or contemporaneously with the intentional action whose intention it is.’ (Anscombe 1983: 179–80)

Soteriou’s argument for his proposal is that if we conceive of thinking out loud in some other way, ‘we would not seem to have a genuine case of calculating whether *p* out loud, but rather a case of the agent saying out loud what he or she had just done.’ (Soteriou 2009: 241) However, I am not sure that the consequence is unacceptable. Maybe thinking out loud is indeed a case of saying what one has just thought. Soteriou’s claim is plausible for phenomenological reasons: it does not seem that with an utterance of type (f)

discussed above, such as calculating out loud, or noticing that p follows from q out loud, there are two mental events: one of having a certain intention (to Φ that p by uttering s), and a separate mental and physical event of actually uttering s . Uses of language in thought are *spontaneous* mental episodes. They are not planned for in advance, and are not the realization of a prospective intention (or intention for the future, that is, an intention that clearly precedes the act). Moreover, spontaneity is not a contingent feature of the examples gathered under type (f), but a necessary characteristic of uses of language in thought. If there is a prospective intention that precedes the utterance of s , then the utterance can play no role in getting the subject to entertain p . Therefore, all plausible candidates for a use of language in thought, from a phenomenological point of view, are those in which there are no such prospective intentions to utter s meaning that p , and so the utterance is spontaneous. However, this phenomenological evidence does not suffice to conclude that there is no intention to Φ that p in uttering s . The spontaneous character of cases (f) is compatible with there being two mental events that take place simultaneously. And in some cases there is phenomenological support for the claim that there are two distinct mental events: imagine a case of calculating or thinking out loud similar to those discussed under category (f), with the only difference that some deficiency in the production of the utterance gets in the way so as to impede the successful performance of the utterance (e.g. the speaker swallows a fly, or starts to cough, exactly in the moment when she opens her mouth to utter s).¹⁴ It seems that in such cases we are capable of entertaining the proposition we intended to voice, independently of the failure to voice it. This means that it is not one, but two

¹⁴ Manuel García-Carpintero brought to my attention this kind of cases in personal communication.

mental events that were taking place simultaneously.¹⁵ The lesson to be drawn is that the character of spontaneity of cases (f) is not a reason for rejecting that they are realizations of intentions. The thought experiment presented shows that the existence of the intention to Φ that p (or of some other mental state with p as content) is not conceptually dependent on the successful accomplishment of the utterance.

The above thought experiment also provides phenomenological evidence in favour of the conclusion of the argument I proposed, that is, that when thinking out loud the utterance of the sentence does not lead to thinking the content one meant by that utterance. The thinking of the content is independent of uttering the sentence. Other phenomenological data that support the same point may be drawn from cases of mispronunciation. As in communication, one may also mispronounce a word when using language in thought. Consider a mental experiment, similar to the one Speaks proposes, in which I say to myself ‘All the bottles are full’ meaning that all the bottles in the room are empty. I do not intentionally use ‘full’ to mean empty, rather this is a result of a mistake at the level of producing the correct word. But it would not be possible for me to think empty and say ‘full’ if the utterance of the word played a role in my forming the thought, as condition (iii) requires for speakers when they use language in thought. It must be the other way around. So, the utterance of the words in cases of type (f) is not the cause of my entertaining the thought. Such cases suggest that the thought is formed independently of the production of the utterance. This would not be possible if thinking out loud consisted in a single irreducible mental event of thinking out loud that p .

¹⁵ These episodes are failed attempts to use language in thought, and not instances of such uses. They fail on condition (i), i.e. the speaker did not mean a full proposition by the fragment of sentence that she managed to utter; she has not managed to utter the sentence by which she means that p .

Finally, let me propose an explanation for why cases of type (f) seem to fulfil condition (iii), that is, why an utterance by which the subject meant that p seems to have played a causal role in getting the subject to form the thought that p . In complex processes of thinking that are made up of various steps (such as making plans step by step, evaluating arguments, making calculations or formal derivations etc.) it is important to keep track of the outcome of the previous steps. The success of the whole enterprise depends on the correctness of each step. Therefore, such complex processes may benefit from the use of devices that may help the memory. Writing down the result of the previous step, or saying it out loud, facilitates memorizing it. These episodes of verbalizing what one has just thought are useful during such mental processes that have various steps organized in a chain.

The use of language in (f) seems to be nothing more than a way of taking notes, that is, a device that helps fix into the memory the content that was already judged. To pursue further the comparison with taking notes, the suggestion is that the interaction between *reading* these notes and *deciding* the next step to be made gives the impression that words help entertain a thought. Indeed they do, but the sentence that I use to memorize p for further use in the chain of reasoning does not help me entertain p , but facilitates the next steps in the process, such as an inference from p to q . This error theory does not apply equally well to cases of isolated thinking out loud, which do not form part of chains of reasoning. Thus, in the case of noticing out loud that it is already 16:10 the explanation does not work, because there is no next step in a chain of reasoning that the voicing of the thought helps get at. But it is also true that in these cases the intuition that language plays a role in forming the thought is less strong.

To sum up, I have argued that the use of language that Speaks's test

requires for it to function is intuitively most closely related to cases of type (f). I have proposed a definition of the uses of language in thought relevant for Speaks's test, and I have argued that there are no cases of language in thought, as defined. Therefore, the question of the title should receive a negative answer: there are solitary uses of language, but these are not uses of language in thought, if the latter concept is understood according to the characterization I have offered, suggested by Speaks in his article. Thinking out loud should be analysed as a complex act in which the thought is voiced out loud, although the voicing does not play any causal role in bringing about the thought.¹⁶

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