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SCHIFFER

MEANING

, CHAPTER 1

## I

## INTRODUCTION TO A THEORY OF MEANING

### I.1 *Some meanings of 'Meaning'*

WHAT is meaning? That is the question I shall be primarily concerned to answer in this essay—at least for those senses of 'meaning' and its cognates especially relevant to an understanding of language and communication.

That is our question, but we will not get very far by asking it. We might instead try asking, what is it for something  $x$  to mean something? An answer to this question, it would seem, would put us some way toward an understanding of the concept of meaning. The trouble with this question is that utterances of the form ' $x$  means something' may be true in at least two different ways. For consider the following two sentences.

- (1) Seymour meant something.
- (2) That mark means something.

If (1) is true, then it is most likely that Seymour *did* something. But if (2) is true, it is unlikely that that mark did something. If (2) is true, then it will be true that that mark has meaning. But if Seymour means something it is unlikely that he has meaning. (Unlikely but not impossible. Seymour may mean something in the same way that, say, a signal flag means something. Thus, a lighthouse keeper might communicate to ships at sea that there is a hurricane coming by putting his son Seymour on the top of the lighthouse, in which case any sailor worth his salt would know that Seymour meant "there is a hurricane coming".)

For the moment, let us write ' $\text{means}_s$ ' for the sense (or senses) of 'means' appropriate to sentences like (1) and ' $\text{means}_x$ ' for the sense (or senses) of 'means' appropriate to sentences like (2). Then the question "What is meaning?" is seen to include the following two questions.

- (1) What is it for someone  $S$  to  $\text{mean}_s$  something?
- (2) What is it for something  $x$  to  $\text{mean}_x$  something?

Questions (1) and (2) divide into still further questions.

There are two senses in which a person can usually be said to mean or have meant something. If  $S$  meant<sub>s</sub> something, then it may be that there was something  $x$  such that

(1a)  $S$  meant that . . . by (or in) producing (or doing)  $x$ .

For example:

By (or in) uttering 'The cat is on the mat',  $S$  meant that the cat was on the mat.

By (or in) waving his handkerchief  $S$  meant that the coast was clear.

By (or in) uttering 'Shut the door!'  $S$  meant that you were to shut the door.

If  $S$  meant<sub>s</sub> something, then it may also be that there was something  $x$  such that

(1b)  $S$  meant ". . ." by  $x$ .<sup>1</sup>

For example:

When he said 'My uncle owns a cape'  $S$  meant "promontory of land" by 'cape'.

$S$  meant "his male parent is inexperienced" by 'his father is green'.

Utterances of form (1a) are used to report the "message"  $S$  was communicating; that is, quite roughly, the "information"  $S$  was communicating or the "directive"  $S$  was issuing. Thus, if  $S$  meant that . . . by uttering  $x$ , then the only proper substituends for '. . .' will be sentences—expressions which express a complete thought or action, as they say in the grammar books. Utterances

<sup>1</sup> Something ought to be said about my use of quotation marks. Single quotes (' ') are generally used only when I am talking about the expression contained therein, but occasionally a variable is used both without and within single quotes where it is clear from the context that whatever is a substituent for the one occurrence is a substituent for the other occurrence (thus I might write: 'suppose someone says 'I tell you that  $p$ ' intending his audience to think that  $p$ '). Double quotes (" ") are used in the following ways. (1) They are used for the citation of articles. (2) They are used as "scare quotes". (3) They are sometimes used to quote the (real or imagined) words of another. (4) They are always used in the specification of the meaning of an expression: e.g., 'bachelor' means "unmarried man". (5) Derivatively upon (4), they are used to specify the sense of an expression intended by a speaker: e.g., by 'cape' John meant "promontory of land". With respect to uses (4) and (5), nothing much is intended by this conventional device, except to indicate that the expression enclosed in double quotes is being used to specify the sense or intended sense of some other expression; when a variable occurs within double quotes we obtain a specification of meaning by replacing the variable with a substituent for the variable (cf. William P. Alston, *Philosophy of Language*, p. 21).

of form (1b), on the other hand, are used to report the sense or meaning of  $x$   $S$  intended  $x$  to have (or to be operative) on the occasion of his producing (or doing)  $x$ . Thus, if  $S$  meant ". . ." by  $x$ , then the proper substituent for '. . .' may be a word, a phrase, or a sentence.

It is possible for  $S$  to mean something by (or in) producing (or doing)  $x$  without meaning something by  $x$ , and it is possible for  $S$  to mean something by  $x$  without meaning something by (or in) producing (or doing)  $x$ . For example,  $S$  meant that he was bored by wiggling his ears (he was, say, communicating to his wife by this non-conventional means that he was bored); but in such a case it is unlikely that  $S$  meant something by his ear wiggle, since it is unlikely that  $S$  thought that an ear wiggle had meaning. And, for example, by 'he is blue',  $S$  may mean "he is sad" but not mean anything by uttering 'he is blue': 'he is blue' may have been part of the longer utterance 'he is blue or he is tired', or  $S$  may have uttered 'he is blue' in the course of reciting a poem.

In general, if  $S$  utters a sentence  $\sigma$  and means thereby that  $p$ , then it will also be the case that  $S$  meant " $p$ " by  $\sigma$ . But this need not be so; for example, it might be that when  $S$  uttered 'I'm in hock' he meant "I'm in debt" by 'I'm in hock' (i.e.  $S$  intended the expression 'I'm in hock' to have the same sense as 'I'm in debt' and not, say, 'I'm in white Rhine wine'); but it may also be that  $S$  was speaking ironically and that by uttering 'I'm in hock'  $S$  meant that he was in excellent financial shape.

So the question "What is it for someone to mean<sub>s</sub> something?" divides into the two questions: "What is it for someone to mean something by (or in) producing (or doing)  $x$ ?" and "What is it for someone to mean something by  $x$ ?" And this gives us the following analysanda.

(1a)  $S$  meant something by (or in) producing (or doing)  $x$ .  
( $S$  meant [that] . . . by (or in) producing (or doing)  $x$ );

and

(1b)  $S$  meant something by  $x$ . ( $S$  meant ". . ." by  $x$ ).

(The part in parentheses is to remind us that we do not want an account of what it is to mean something which does not enable us to specify what was meant.)

Question (2), "What is it for something  $x$  to mean<sub>s</sub> something?", also divides into further questions.

The class of things which both mean something and have mean-

ing may be divided into four subclasses: (1) the class of whole-utterance types, such things as sentences and signals; (2) the class of whole-utterance tokens; (3) the class of part-utterance types, such things as words and phrases; and (4) the class of part-utterance tokens. For membership in these four classes we may give the following conditions of adequacy. (1) A type  $x$  is a whole-utterance type if and only if  $x$  means (timeless) "... " and the only proper substituends for '...' are complete sentences. (2) A token  $x$  is a whole-utterance token if and only if  $x$  is a token of a whole-utterance type. (3) A type  $x$  is a part-utterance type if and only if  $x$  means (timeless) "... " and the only proper substituends for '...' are words and/or phrases. (4) A token  $x$  is a part-utterance token if and only if  $x$  is a token of a part-utterance type.

We have, then, the following additional analysanda.

- (2a<sub>1</sub>)  $x$  is a whole-utterance type  
( $x$  is a whole-utterance type which means "...".)
- (2a<sub>2</sub>)  $x$  is a whole-utterance token  
( $x$  is a whole-utterance token which means "...".)
- (2b<sub>1</sub>)  $x$  is a part-utterance type  
( $x$  is a part-utterance type which means "...".)
- (2b<sub>2</sub>)  $x$  is a part-utterance token  
( $x$  is a part-utterance token which means "...".)

It may seem that even if we provide correct analyses for (1a)-(2b<sub>2</sub>) we shall still not have a complete analysis of the relevant concept of meaning; for we should still have sentences of the following forms to worry about.

- (3) The (a) meaning of  $x$  is "...".  
e.g., The meaning of 'vixen' is "female fox".
- (4)  $x$  has meaning.  
e.g., 'Horse' has meaning.
- (5)  $x$  is meaningful (less).  
e.g., 'cat mat on is the' is meaningless.
- (6)  $x$  has two meanings.  
e.g., 'Cape' has two meanings.
- (7)  $x$  means the same as  $y$ .  
e.g., 'Vixen' means the same as 'female fox'.
- (8) The meaning of  $x$  includes the meaning of  $y$ .  
e.g., The meaning of 'bachelor' includes the meaning of 'unmarried'.

However, (3)-(5) reduce to (2a)-(2b<sub>2</sub>). For: a meaning of  $x$  is "... " if and only if  $x$  means "...";  $x$  has meaning if and only if  $x$  means something;  $x$  is meaningful if and only if  $x$  means something; and  $x$  is meaningless if and only if it is not the case that  $x$  means something. And while (6)-(8) do not directly reduce to (2a)-(2b<sub>2</sub>), if correct analyses can be provided for (2a)-(2b<sub>2</sub>), it will then only be a short step to doing the same for (6)-(8) and any similar concepts. I submit, then, that if correct analyses are provided for (1a)-(2b<sub>2</sub>) we shall have answered or virtually answered the question "What is meaning?"—at least for those senses of 'meaning' and its cognates especially and directly relevant to an understanding of language and communication.

Of course not every sense of 'meaning' and its cognates is especially and directly relevant to an understanding of language and communication, and there are senses which are so relevant but which we should want to keep separate from the senses we shall be concerned with.

- (1) By uttering 'that ignoble cretin' he meant you.
- (2) I meant what I said when I said that I hate you.
- (3) Your love means more to me than all the tea in China.
- (4) I meant that [e.g., my putting a mouse in your bed] as a joke.
- (5) I meant to scare you by throwing the knife.
- (6) Those footprints mean that someone was here.

(1)-(6) are roughly equivalent to (1')-(6') respectively.

- (1') By uttering 'that ignoble cretin' he was referring to you.
- (2') I was sincere and serious in saying that I hate you.
- (3') Your love is more important to me than all the tea in China.
- (4') I intended that as a joke.
- (5') I intended to scare you by throwing the knife.
- (6') Those footprints indicate (imply) that someone was here.

No doubt there are important connections between at least some of these senses of 'mean' and the senses we shall be concerned with (Grice's "natural"—"non-natural" classification is highly suggestive in this respect). Nevertheless, these connections will not be explored by me, and my sole purpose in listing these examples is to put them out of the way.

I.2 *An order of priorities*

Let us say in an old-fashioned and unrefined way that a concept  $\phi$  is "logically prior" to a concept  $\psi$  if (1) the concept  $\phi$  enters into the analysis of  $\psi$  but (2) the concept  $\psi$  does not enter into the analysis of  $\phi$ .

What can be said about the order of priorities obtaining between our four analysanda, (1a)–(2b)? (In this section I ignore (2a<sub>2</sub>) and (2b<sub>2</sub>)). It would be naïve to suppose that this question could be settled independently of a complete theory of meaning, but a preliminary and tentative attempt to answer this question may make clear some of the rationale behind starting out in one way rather than another.

First, is (2a), the concept of a whole-utterance type, logically prior to (2b), the concept of a part-utterance type, or vice versa, or neither? A *prima facie* reason for thinking that the concept of a whole-utterance type cannot be logically prior to the concept of a part-utterance type is that the meaning of a sentence is partly a function of the meaning of its words. On the other hand, there are stronger reasons for thinking that the notion of a whole-utterance type is logically prior to the notion of a part-utterance type. In the first place, not all whole-utterance types are like sentences in being composite or structured; some, such as an air-raid whistle, are *non-composite*. A whole-utterance type  $x$ , we may say, is non-composite just in case there is no "proper part" of  $x$ ,  $y$ , such that both  $y$  means something and the meaning of  $x$  is determined in part by the meaning of  $y$ . So if, as it seems reasonable to suppose, a single and univocal account can be given of what it is for something to be a whole-utterance type, such an account will be independent of the notion of a part-utterance type. In the second place, something is a part-utterance type only if it is the sort of thing which when combined in certain ways with certain other things yields a whole-utterance type.

It is clear that (1b), the concept of someone meaning something by  $x$ , cannot be logically prior to (2a); for  $S$  can mean "... " by  $x$  only if ( $S$  believes that)  $x$  already means "... ". However, this does not commit us to the view that either (2a) or (2b) is logically prior to (1b): perhaps (1b)–(2b) are each to be analysed in terms of an account of (1a), an account, that is, of what it is for someone to mean something by (or in) producing (or doing)  $x$ .

This leaves us with the crucial question: which is logically prior, (1a) or (2a)? There are two considerations which together give us good reason to suppose that (1a) is logically prior to (2a). In the first place,  $x$  is a whole-utterance type which means, say, "snow is white" only if people do, would, or could mean that snow is white by uttering  $x$ . Roughly speaking and with reservations, one knows what a whole-utterance type  $x$  means only if one knows what a person would normally or ordinarily mean by uttering  $x$ . In the second place, it is possible for a person to mean something by uttering  $x$  even though  $x$  has no meaning. For example, in suitable circumstances  $S$  might communicate to an audience  $A$  that he,  $S$ , is angry by uttering the sound 'grrr'. In such an event,  $S$  may intend  $A$  to recognize that 'grrr' resembles the sound dogs make when they are angry and to infer in part therefrom that  $S$ 's intention in uttering 'grrr' was to inform  $A$  that  $S$  was angry.

Let us hereinafter refer to an account of what it is for someone  $S$  to mean something by (or in) producing (or doing)  $x$  as an account of  $S$ -meaning. Now the above considerations do not prove that an account of  $S$ -meaning can be given which is logically prior to accounts of (1b)–(2b), and certain general objections will shortly be considered to such a claim, but these considerations do give us reason for beginning our enterprise by seeking to provide an account of  $S$ -meaning, one which is not in terms of any semantic notions. Such an account has been offered by Professor H. P. Grice in his article, "Meaning". Not only is Grice's account highly illuminating, it is also, so far as I know, the only published attempt ever made by a philosopher or anyone else to say precisely and completely what it is for someone to mean something. We will do well to consider it in some detail.

I.3 *Grice's account of S-meaning*

Three preliminary remarks are in order before presenting Grice's account.

(1) Grice is concerned to analyse those senses of 'meaning' especially relevant to an understanding of language and communication, and he uses the label 'non-natural meaning' both to mark those senses and to distinguish them from those senses of 'meaning' and its cognates typified by expressions such as 'he meant to put salt in his soup' and 'those spots mean measles', which Grice labels 'natural meaning'. Since we shall only be

concerned with non-natural meaning, the qualification may be dropped.

(2) Grice uses 'utterance' and its cognates in an artificially extended way which includes non-linguistic items and behaviour. I will continue this artificial use, so that now an account of *S*-meaning becomes an account of what it is for a person *S* to mean something by (or in) uttering (an utterance) *x*.

(3) What Grice offers us is an account of what it is for someone to mean something by (an utterance) *x*. Grice did not distinguish between the two lately distinguished senses in which a person could be said to have meant something, but it is clear that if his analysis has any application at all, it is as an analysis for what it is for someone to mean something by (or in) uttering *x*. The needed correction will be made in the restatements below and in our discussion of Grice's account.

Grice presents his analysis informally and succinctly. He first suggests that

'[*S*] meant something by *x*' is (roughly) equivalent to '[*S*] intended the utterance of *x* to produce some effect in an audience by means of the recognition of this intention' ("Meaning", p. 385);

but this is soon qualified, so that:

the intended effect must be something which in some sense is within the control of the audience, or that in some sense of 'reason' the recognition of the intention behind *x* is for the audience a reason and not merely a cause.

This qualification is needed in order to rule out a possible counter-example.

Suppose I discovered some person so constituted that, when I told him that whenever I grunted in a special way I wanted him to blush or to incur some physical malady, thereafter whenever he recognized the grunt (and with it my intention), he did blush or incur the malady.

Should he then grunt, we should not, Grice thinks, want to say that he thereby meant something.

Let us look more closely at Grice's account, making some needed distinctions along the way.

1. According to Grice, *S* meant something by uttering *x* only if *S* intended his utterance of *x* to produce some effect in an

audience *A*. Taken widely or narrowly enough, this could be read in one or another of three different ways.

- (1) There is an effect *e* such that *S* meant something by uttering *x* only if *S* intended his utterance of *x* to produce *e* in an audience *A*.
- (2) *S* meant something by uttering *x* only if *S* intended that there be an effect *e* such that his utterance of *x* produce *e* in an audience *A*.
- (3) *S* meant something by uttering *x* only if there is an effect *e* such that *S* intended his utterance of *x* to produce *e* in an audience *A*.

Clearly, (1) is not intended: we are not to think that there is a certain effect, say, believing that Caesar was a Turk, such that one means something by uttering something only if one intends someone to believe that Caesar was a Turk. Now in the case of (3) *S* must have in mind a particular effect which he intends to produce in *A*, whereas in the case of (2) *S* may merely intend that some effect, no matter what, gets produced in *A*. Since, amongst other things, Grice says that we know what was meant just in case we know what effect *S* intended to produce in *A* (by means of recognition of intention), it is fairly clear that he intended us to take his account of *S*-meaning as committing him to (3). In the restatement of Grice's account below, we shall express this informally by saying that *S* meant something by uttering *x* only if *S* uttered *x* intending to produce a *certain* response *r* in an audience *A*.

A similar problem arises with regard to the intended audience. And here, too, I think we are at least provisionally to understand Grice as meaning that *S* must intend to produce an effect in a *certain* audience *A*; that is, *S* means something by uttering *x* only if there is an audience *A* and a response *r* such that *S* intends his utterance of *x* to produce *r* in *A*. There are several reasons why this latest refinement should be taken as provisional. In the first place, even if *S* must intend to produce a response in a particular person, the "particular person" he has in mind may not exist. In the second place, it does not appear to be a necessary condition for *S* meaning something by uttering *x* that he intends to produce a response in a particular person. If *S* is drowning, he may shout 'Help!' intending anyone who hears him to come to his rescue. And in the third place, we are here quantifying into

an intensional context and this may license inferences we might not otherwise be willing to tolerate. (Grice is also, of course, quantifying into an intensional context in the case of the intended response, but here the relevant effects, being actions and psychological states, are themselves intensional states, and so we are less worried, perhaps even rightly.) At any rate, I shall leave the restatement as it is until section III.5, where these difficulties are removed.

2. What kind of effect must  $S$  intend to produce in  $A$  if he is to mean something? What is intended by Grice's effect "which in some sense is within the control of the audience, or that in some sense of 'reason' the recognition of the intention behind  $x$  is for the audience a reason and not merely a cause" is any propositional or affective attitude or action. That actions and at least some propositional attitudes—notably believing—are intended by Grice is patent. That affective attitudes are to be included amongst the relevant sorts of effects is shown by Grice's willingness to allow that one meant something where the effect intended to be brought about by means of recognition of intention was that  $A$  should feel distressed, humiliated, offended, or insulted. So the phrase 'a certain response  $r$ ' as it appears in the restatements below is equivalent to 'a certain propositional or affective attitude or action  $r$ '.

3. Thus, according to Grice,  $S$  meant something by uttering  $x$  only if  $S$  intended his utterance of  $x$  to produce a certain response  $r$  in a certain audience  $A$ . But if  $S$  is to mean something by uttering  $x$ , there are certain restrictions on the way he must intend to produce  $r$  in  $A$ . (1)  $S$  must intend to produce  $r$  in  $A$  "by means of"  $A$ 's recognition of  $S$ 's intention to produce  $r$  in  $A$ . And this involves the following.  $S$  utters  $x$  intending to produce  $r$  in  $A$  and intending that  $r$  be produced in  $A$  by virtue (at least in part) of  $A$ 's belief that  $S$  uttered  $x$  intending to produce  $r$  in  $A$ . If we allow that reasons are causes, we may say that  $S$  intends  $r$  to be produced in  $A$  by virtue (at least in part) of  $A$ 's belief that  $S$  uttered  $x$  intending to produce  $r$  in  $A$  just in case  $S$  uttered  $x$  intending that  $A$ 's belief that  $S$  uttered  $x$  intending to produce  $r$  in  $A$  be (at least) a necessary part of a sufficient cause of  $A$ 's response  $r$ . (2) The other restriction is that  $A$ 's belief that  $S$  uttered  $x$  intending to produce  $r$  in  $A$  must not merely be intended to be a cause of  $A$ 's response  $r$ , it must also be intended to be  $A$ 's reason, or part of  $A$ 's reason, for  $A$ 's response  $r$ . (It is not diffi-

cult to see how the fact that  $S$  intends (or wants)  $A$  to do such-and-such may be a reason for  $A$ 's doing such-and-such; it is perhaps more difficult to see how the fact that  $S$  intends  $A$  to think that such-and-such is the case may provide  $A$  with a reason for thinking that such-and-such is the case. What Grice primarily had in mind was simply this: sometimes the fact that a certain person believes (or believes he knows) a certain proposition to be true is good evidence that that proposition is true, and sometimes the fact that a certain person intends (or wants) another to believe that a certain proposition is true is good evidence that the former person himself believes (he knows) that that proposition is true. There are interesting questions concerning intentions, reasons, and affective attitudes, but for reasons that will be made apparent in section III.5, I shall ignore them.)

So we may, at this point, restate Grice's analysis of  $S$ -meaning in the following way.

$S$  meant something by (or in) uttering  $x$  iff  $S$  uttered  $x$  intending

- (1) that his utterance of  $x$  produce a certain response  $r$  in a certain audience  $A$ ;
- (2) that  $A$  recognize  $S$ 's intention (1);
- (3) that  $A$ 's recognition of  $S$ 's intention (1) shall function as at least part of  $A$ 's reason for  $A$ 's response  $r$ .<sup>2</sup>

5. We may further refine Grice's account of  $S$ -meaning by making explicit something which is implicit in his account but not built directly into his stated analysis of what it is for someone to mean something. If  $S$  is to mean something by uttering  $x$ , then  $S$  must intend  $A$  to recognize that  $S$  uttered  $x$  with the intention of producing thereby a certain response  $r$  in  $A$ . How will this recognition be achieved? It is implicit throughout Grice's article that  $S$  will utter  $x$  with the intention that  $A$  should recognize that  $x$  has a certain feature (or features)  $f$ , or that something  $f$  is true of  $x$ , and infer at least in part therefrom that  $S$  uttered  $x$  with the intention of producing  $r$  in  $A$ . In other words, if  $S$  meant something by uttering  $x$ , there is a certain feature (or features)  $f$  such that  $S$  uttered  $x$  intending that a certain audience  $A$  should recognize that  $x$  is  $f$  and intending that  $A$  should think, on the basis (in part) of thinking that  $x$  is  $f$ , that  $S$  uttered  $x$  intending to

<sup>2</sup> This is basically the restatement given by P. F. Strawson in "Intention and Convention in Speech Acts", p. 446.

produce a certain response  $r$  in  $A$ . For example:  $S$  utters 'It is raining' intending  $A$  to recognize that 'It is raining' has the feature of being an English sentence which means "it is raining" and intending  $A$  to infer (in part) therefrom that  $S$  uttered 'It is raining' intending thereby to produce in  $A$  the belief that it is raining, etc.;  $S$  utters 'urf' intending  $A$  to recognize that 'urf' has the feature of resembling the barking sound made by dogs and intending  $A$  to infer (in part) therefrom that  $S$  uttered 'urf' intending  $A$  to think that there are dogs nearby, etc. We might say that in the first example the relevant feature of  $S$ 's utterance is a "non-natural" one, whereas in the second example it is a "natural" one.

Without this most recent emendation, Grice's analysis would seem to be open to some such counter-example as the following one. (That the counter-example is so *recherché* probably explains why the condition in question was not explicitly stated by Grice.)

$S$ , a neuro-physiologist, knows that by giving  $A$  an electric shock of a certain sort he will effect a change in  $A$ 's brain state *directly causing*  $A$  to believe that  $S$  administered the shock with the intention of producing in  $A$  the belief that  $A$  was about to inherit ten thousand acres of Mississippi swamp-land. Now even if  $S$  should administer this electric shock with the intention of getting  $A$  to believe, by means of recognition of intention, that he is about to inherit the swamp-land, I do not think we should want to say that by administering the shock  $S$  meant that  $A$  was about to inherit ten thousand acres of Mississippi swamp-land (or anything else). And I suggest that at least one thing which precludes this case from being an instance of  $S$ -meaning is that  $S$  did not administer the shock with the intention that  $A$  should *infer* (at least in part) from the fact that  $S$  administered the shock that  $S$  administered the shock with the intention of getting  $A$  to think he was about to inherit the swamp-land. For suppose that  $S$  and  $A$  had arranged that the electric shock should be used as a signal to inform  $A$  of the outcome of his grandmother's will; in this case one would not be reluctant to say that  $S$  meant something by administering the shock.

The following restatement may stand as our final version of Grice's original account of  $S$ -meaning.

$S$  meant something by (or in) uttering  $x$  iff  $S$  uttered  $x$  intending

- (1) that  $x$  have a certain feature(s)  $f$ ;
- (2) that a certain audience  $A$  recognize (think) that  $x$  is  $f$ ;
- (3) that  $A$  infer at least in part from the fact that  $x$  is  $f$  that  $S$  uttered  $x$  intending (4):
- (4) that  $S$ 's utterance of  $x$  produce a certain response  $r$  in  $A$ ;
- (5) that  $A$ 's recognition of  $S$ 's intention (4) shall function as at least part of  $A$ 's reason for his response  $r$ .<sup>3</sup>

6. One can know that  $S$  meant something without knowing what he meant. Given that  $S$  performed a Gricean act of  $S$ -meaning, how are we to determine what  $S$  meant? Here Grice suggests:

that to ask what [ $S$ ] meant is to ask for a specification of the intended effect . . .<sup>4</sup>

Accordingly, we may complete Grice's account of  $S$ -meaning with the following addendum.

What  $S$  meant by uttering  $x$  is determined by and only by the value of ' $r$ '.

There are two things to notice about this part of Grice's analysis. The first point is in connection with the idea that an account of  $S$ -meaning may be taken as primary and an account of utterance-type/token meaning provided in terms of this primary account, and that is that what is meant is not even in part determined, logically, by what is said, i.e., by the value of ' $x$ '. For if what were meant 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  $x$ . To say this does not commit Grice to holding that one can say whatever one likes and mean thereby whatever one pleases to mean. One must utter  $x$  with the relevant intentions, and not any value of ' $x$ ' will be appropriate to this end: I could not in any ordinary circumstances request you to pass the salt by uttering 'The flamingoes are flying south early this year'. Much more will be said about this later. The second point to notice is that Grice's condition pertaining to what is meant does not provide a criterion for determining what  $S$  meant, but only a criterion for determining what must be determined if one is to determine what

<sup>3</sup> Previously I stated conditions (1)-(3) somewhat differently; I owe this more perspicuous way of stating them to Grice.

<sup>4</sup> "Meaning", p. 385.

*S* meant. However, it is clear that Grice would want to say (or would have in 1957) that if the intended response was the belief that *p*, then *S* meant that *p*, and if the intended response was *A*'s doing *X*, then *S* meant that *A* was to do *X*. (But what does *S* mean when the intended response is *A*'s feeling humiliated?)

What of the connection between *S*-meaning and the meaning of utterance types and tokens? Here Grice leaves us with two rough suggestions:

'*x* meant something' is (roughly) equivalent to 'Somebody meant something by *x*',

and

'*x* means (timeless) that so-and-so' might as a first shot be equated with some statement or disjunction of statements about what 'people' (vague) intend (with qualifications about recognition) to effect by *x*.

I hope that whatever truth is contained in these suggestions will be revealed in chapters V and VI.

There are two very general objections which have been made against Grice's implied suggestion that his account of *S*-meaning may be taken as primary, and an account of utterance-meaning provided in terms of it. Since these objections apply to any such attempt to take the concept of *S*-meaning as logically prior to the concept of utterance-meaning, it will be well to consider them briefly here before turning to a more thorough examination of Grice's account of *S*-meaning.

The first objection may be put thus: any adequate account of *S*-meaning will require that *S* have certain propositional attitudes if he is to mean something; but such attitudes are correctly analysed only as attitudes toward sentences.

I do not believe that psychological states such as believing and desiring are best analysed as being attitudes toward sentences. Indeed, I think this view false. However, since I cannot prove that this view is false, I will leave a discussion of this important issue for some other occasion. But assume that propositional attitudes are attitudes toward sentences. It would not follow from this that Grice's account of *S*-meaning (or any relevantly similar account) is false, nor would it show that an account of utterance-

meaning in terms of such an account is false. The most that would follow, if it does follow, is that the concept of *S*-meaning is not logically prior to the concept of utterance-meaning and that an analysis of meaning along Gricean lines is in a peculiar way like a "closed curve in space".

It does not seem unreasonable to suppose that in some interesting sense there are certain propositional attitudes which one cannot have unless one has a language (beliefs *about* language are language-dependent in an uninteresting sense), and from this it follows that it is not unreasonable to suppose that there are certain things one cannot mean unless one has a language. Some philosophers believe that there are certain things one cannot mean unless one has a language and that this fact constitutes an objection to a Gricean account of meaning. This is the second objection I have in mind. Hence, Searle, in a point directed against Grice, suggests that:

unless one has a language one cannot request of someone that he, e.g., undertake a research project on the problem of diagnosing and treating mononucleosis in undergraduates in American universities.<sup>5</sup>

I do not know whether Searle's point is true, and if it is true, I do not know whether it is logically true or only contingently true. But even if it is true, why should it be taken as an objection to Grice's programme? I think the answer is that it is thought that the thesis in question entails another thesis, which might be formulated in the following way: there is at least one proposition *p* such that it is impossible for anyone to believe and, *a fortiori*, to mean that *p* unless there is an utterance type *x* such that *x* means "*p*". This being so, one could not easily say that *x* means "*p*" only if people do, would, or could mean that *p* by uttering *x*. (Searle apparently fails to realize that if this is a difficulty for Grice's theory, it is equally a difficulty for his own theory of speech acts.)

But the view that in order to mean certain things one must have a language may more plausibly be taken as committing one not to the above thesis but only to the following thesis, which is compatible with a Gricean approach to meaning and language.

There are certain propositional attitudes such that it is possible for agents to have them independently of having any language or any other conventional means of communication and such that

<sup>5</sup> John R. Searle, *Speech Acts*, p. 38.

once agents have these propositional attitudes, they will communicate with one another. Once agents begin to communicate with one another they will begin to develop a conventional system of communication. Once even a rudimentary "language" or conventional system of communication is possessed by a group of agents it will then become possible for them to have propositional attitudes which they could not otherwise have; and this will make it possible for them to communicate things which they could not otherwise communicate, which in turn will result in a more sophisticated "language", which in turn will make it possible for them to have propositional attitudes they could not otherwise have, and so on.

On this view, then, the fact (if it is a fact) that there are certain propositional attitudes one cannot have unless one has a language is no objection to a Gricean approach to meaning and language. Certain aspects of this view will be elaborated in chapter V.

## II

TOWARD AN ACCOUNT OF  
S-MEANING*Introduction*

ONE way of finding out what meaning is to see what meaning is not, and in this chapter I will be mainly concerned to discuss certain objections to Grice's account of *S*-meaning; objections, first, to the alleged sufficiency of Grice's conditions, and objections, lastly, to the alleged necessity of one of Grice's conditions. In between I will try to show, in part, what must be added to Grice's account in order to arrive at a set of conditions which are jointly sufficient for someone's meaning something by uttering *x*. The objections I discuss in this chapter do not exhaust those that can and have been made against Grice's account of *S*-meaning. Some of these objections will be dealt with in subsequent chapters.

I shall begin with the restatement of Grice's account given on pp. 12-13.

II.1 *Some objections to the alleged sufficiency of Grice's analysans*

(a) Here is a slightly more detailed version of a counter-example of Strawson's.<sup>1</sup>

*S* wants to get *A* to believe that the house *A* is thinking of buying is rat-infested. *S* decides to bring about this belief in *A* by taking into the house and letting loose a big fat sewer rat. For *S* has the following scheme. He knows that *A* is watching him and knows that *A* believes that *S* is unaware that he, *A*, is watching him. It is *S*'s intention that *A* should (wrongly) infer from the fact that *S* let the rat loose that *S* did so with the intention that *A* should arrive at the house, see the rat, and, taking the rat as "natural evidence", infer therefrom that the house is rat-infested. *S* further intends *A* to realize that given the nature of the rat's arrival, the existence of the rat cannot be taken as genuine or natural evidence that the house is rat-infested; but *S* knows

<sup>1</sup> P. F. Strawson, "Intention and Convention in Speech Acts", pp. 446-7.