

Outline of the Gricean programme: Grice

FORMALISM AND INFORMALISM. Grice begins rather from afar. The first issue he wishes to address is the supposed debate between two traditions of semantics. Many people have conceded the divergence between the behaviour of a formalised language (say, first-order calculus) and natural language. In the formalist tradition (Frege belongs there), this divergence was taken to be the evidence that natural language is inadequate for the purposes of science. In the informalist tradition, this was taken to be the evidence of the narrow limits of the formalised language. 22

Example 1 (Disjunction). Suppose I say:

(21-1) Either Ann loves Paul or she loves Peter.

It seems that with my utterance I wished to exclude the situation where Ann loves both Peter and Paul. However, if I formalise this as ' $A \vee B$ ', then my statement is true even if Ann loves both. My use of 'or' does not then seem to match the use of ' \vee '.

Example 2 (Proper names). This is a problem familiar to us from Frege. Suppose I say:

(21-2) Odysseus did not land in Athens.

What I said is true. But if I formalise this as ' $\neg L(o, a)$ ', then its truth depends on assigning reference to individual constants, which cannot be done: 'Odysseus' is an empty name. Conclusion: proper names do not function the same way in formalised and natural languages.

Example 3 (Quantifiers). Suppose I say:

(21-3) Some people voted Donald Trump.

If I formalise this as ' $\exists xV(x, d)$ ', then this is true even if all people voted Trump. However, it seems that precisely this I wished to deny.

Grice positions himself above this debate. He claims that the debate participants ignore the way conversation works. Once we see that, the disagreement should disappear. 24

IMPLICATURE INTRODUCED. Consider the following conversation: 24

(21-4) Ann: How is Ludwig doing at his job?
 Paul: He hasn't been to prison yet.

What Paul has *said*, what he has asserted, was just that Ludwig hasn't been in prison yet. Yet this is not all the information he wished to communicate. Presumably he *implied* that Ludwig was careful with his job responsibilities, or that he got tolerably well with his colleagues. This additional information is not delivered by the semantic content of Paul's utterance. Instead, it must be *calculated from* his utterance.

Now you might think that the implicature calculation is completely indeterminate and so sensitive to context, the particular details of the conversation, that you cannot say anything general about it. Grice's ambition is to show that in fact it is possible to have a theory laying down rules of that calculation. It is possible to give a general description of the dynamics of conversation.

INDEXICALS. Paul's statement in (21-4) contains an indexical 'he'. Of course Paul did not assert '*He* hasn't been to prison yet.' There is no proposition here to assert. He rather asserted:

(21-5) Ludwig hasn't been to prison yet.

So context is required for determining the semantic content of the utterance, for making it truth-apt. This is a different role of context corresponding to a different stage in the conversation. One type of context is needed to determine the semantic value of the utterance (Austin's locutionary act), and another type of context is needed to determine pragmatic implicatures.

(21-6) He is in the grip of vice.

Nothing is said until, and unless, the reference of 'he' on this occasion has been filled. Moreover, context should determine whether the expression 'in the grip' is used literally or figuratively. But the decision to interpret it one way or the other does not depend on the theory of implicatures. That is, the figurative meaning (21-6) is not itself an implicature. What implicatures there are must be decided *after* that decision is taken. But I think this is not so clear. Gricean maxims listed later may actually help us in determining the intended meaning of the expression (whether it is literal or figurative).

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