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“Meaning”: Philosophical Forebears and Linguistic Descendants

Siobhan Chapman

RESUMEN

Este artículo ofrece una visión general de las ideas que ayudaron a dar forma al pensamiento de Grice en “Meaning”, y considera también algunas de las respuestas más destacadas que dieron a Grice sus contemporáneos. Estos dos conjuntos de influencias alimentaron el desarrollo de la teoría de la conversación de Grice, que ha tenido un enorme impacto en el pensamiento posterior sobre el lenguaje en muchas áreas, particularmente en la disciplina lingüística conocida como “pragmática”. En las valoraciones de la obra de Grice, “Meaning” resulta a menudo ensombrecido por la teoría de la conversación, pero merece la pena volver sobre este artículo, ya que es el que establece los fundamentos generales de su filosofía del lenguaje.

ABSTRACT

This article offers an overview of some of the philosophical ideas that helped to shape Grice’s thinking in “Meaning”, and also considers some of the most salient responses to “Meaning” from his contemporaries. These two sets of influences fed into the development of Grice’s theory of conversation, which has had an enormous impact on subsequent thinking about language in many areas, particularly in the linguistic discipline of pragmatics. “Meaning” is sometimes overshadowed by the theory of conversation in assessments of Grice’s work, but is worth revisiting because it sets out the foundations of his philosophy of language as a whole.

I. INTRODUCTION

Paul Grice’s “Meaning” is strikingly brief and deceptively simple-looking. At just twelve pages, it is the shortest of the five articles that appeared in volume 66 number 3 of *The Philosophical Review*. It was published there alongside articles with portentous and ambitious titles such as “Moral Worth and Moral Credit” and “On ‘What is a Poem?’”. In contrast Grice presented an argument that is packed with common-sense appeal and, like all philosophical arguments that draw on common sense, can appear at first glance modest almost to the point of simplicity. It could be tersely summarised as: the mean-

ing of an utterance is dependent on the intentions of the speaker who produces it. Yet Grice's attempt to take on board this intuitively plausible idea and give it serious philosophical treatment and expression has been hugely influential on the study of linguistic meaning over the past fifty years.

"Meaning" draws on a number of philosophical ideas and schools of thought of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, although these can be difficult to identify individually. This is because "Meaning" wears its scholarship lightly. To put it differently and more harshly, Grice displayed a rather cavalier attitude to explaining his sources. In "Meaning" and elsewhere he paid scant regard to the usual academic requirements of citation and referencing. It was not that he was uninterested in past philosophers and philosophies. On the contrary, he argued explicitly for the value and importance of attending to previous work in a field, and his own work was always informed by a broad knowledge of what had been said before. But he seems always to have been more interested in pursuing an idea and searching out its possible implications than in the laborious process of acknowledging its predecessors.

This article will be concerned with the ways in which "Meaning" was informed by ordinary language philosophy, by founding work in semiology and by work on intentionality. It will also look at some responses to "Meaning" from Grice's contemporaries, and at his own subsequent development of his ideas. 2007 is the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of "Meaning", but it is also the fortieth anniversary of Grice's William James lectures at Harvard, in which he expounded his theory of conversation. This developed out of Grice's battles with problems in "Meaning" and with responses to these from his critics. The impact of Grice's theory of conversation on linguistics, particularly in the field of pragmatics, can hardly be exaggerated.

II. ORDINARY LANGUAGE PHILOSOPHY AND "MEANING"

Grice is often described as a philosopher of ordinary language. To linguists at least, Grice's name is coupled with J.L. Austin's as most readily associated with the ordinary language philosophy (OLP) movement that dominated Oxford philosophy in the fifteen or so years immediately following the second world war. Austin's theory of speech acts [Austin (1962)] and Grice's of conversational implicature [Grice (1975)] are seen as the two great legacies of OLP to present-day linguistics. Certainly, Grice was working in Oxford throughout the ascendancy of OLP, and was a member of Austin's carefully selected circle of close colleagues. He was sometimes a self-appointed apologist for the approach to philosophy largely founded by Austin and then dominated by him [for instance, Grice (1958)]. Grice used Austin's methods in his own early work, and returned to them time and again throughout his life. But there were also features of OLP that made him uneasy, and

that he increasingly reacted against. The theory of conversation, in particular, could not have been produced if he had stayed with a rigidly 'ordinary language' approach.

For the historian of ideas, one small part of the interest of "Meaning" is that it documents the beginnings of Grice's slow distancing of himself from OLP. The date of publication is misleading. July 1957 might seem to be rather late in the day to have second thoughts. OLP was already in decline by then, and it was less than three years before Austin's early death precipitated its end. But Grice's paper was in fact completed, in more or less its final state, in 1948. He read it to a meeting of the Oxford Philosophical Society and then put it away. This was typical of Grice; he was notoriously reluctant ever to consider a piece of work finished and was too much of a perfectionist readily to offer work for publication. His colleague P. F. Strawson was more convinced than Grice of the merits of "Meaning", and more concerned that the best of the philosophy being produced in Oxford should be disseminated to a wider audience. When Grice still showed no sign of publishing almost a decade later, Strawson procured the manuscript from him, edited it and submitted it to *The Philosophical Review*. 1948 was early for one of Austin's close colleagues to be challenging the assumptions of OLP. The movement was only just emerging from the hiatus in British philosophy caused by the second world war, and Austin himself was still in the early stages of developing his ideas on performatives and on speech acts.

Perhaps because of its peculiar history, "Meaning" reads more like a presentation to colleagues or a work in progress than a polished journal article. With no introduction, preamble or overview, Grice exhorts his readers to:

Consider the following sentences:

"Those spots mean (meant) measles."

"Those spots didn't mean anything to me, but to the doctor they meant measles."

"The recent budget means that we shall have a hard year" [Grice (1957), p. 213].

He then precedes to list a series of properties of such examples that he later uses to categorise these uses of 'mean' as cases of 'natural meaning'. This is distinguished from 'nonnatural meaning', exemplified in 'Those three rings on the bell (of the bus) mean that the bus is full' and 'That remark, "Smith couldn't get on without his trouble and strife" meant that Smith found his wife indispensable'. Linguistic meaning is thus a subset of nonnatural meaning.

Grice's dramatic use of linguistic examples as a starting point to his philosophical argument was characteristic of OLP. Some years later Austin exhorted a philosophical audience to 'proceed from "ordinary language", that is by examining *what we should say when*, and so why and what we should

mean by it' [Austin (1956), p. 129, original emphasis]. In OLP, unlike some of its more formal predecessors in analytic philosophy, the everyday use of natural language was a legitimate focus of study. This was not just because natural language was an interesting topic in its own right, but also because it provided the best tool at the philosopher's disposal. For Austin, the investigation of any philosophical problem should begin with a careful accumulation and analysis of data from the ordinary uses of language that accompany the particular area of experience. This was not the type of data collection that would be recognised by many present day linguists. Empirical work using occurrence analysis and sampling by use of questionnaires was being done elsewhere in philosophy at that time [for instance Naess (1949)] but not by the philosophers of ordinary language. To them consulting ordinary language meant compiling lists of natural-sounding uses of language that were produced, validated and interpreted by intuition. In "Meaning", Grice introduces his exposition by turning the methodologies of OLP on that most central problem of the philosophy of language: the nature of meaning. His division of cases of meaning into natural and nonnatural is based on two different types of use of the word 'means'.

Grice lists several defining distinctions between the two types that revolve around a simple observation; in cases of nonnatural but not of natural meaning there is someone doing the meaning. In terms of the specific subset of cases of nonnatural meaning that involve the use of language, Grice introduced the notion of a conscious, intending speaker into his account of linguistic meaning. However, he added two extra dimensions that took his definition beyond the crudely common-sense, and made it into a striking, suggestive and controversial new philosophy of language. Firstly, he allocated a role to hearers alongside that of speakers. Secondly, he broadened his intentional account of speaker meaning into a general account of linguistic meaning itself.

The two parts of Grice's much-quoted definition of nonnatural meaning (meaning_{NN}) sum up these two novel aspects of his approach: "A meant_{NN} something by x" is (roughly) equivalent to "A intended the utterance of x to produce some effect in an audience by means of the recognition of this intention" and "x meant_{NN} something" is (roughly) equivalent to "Somebody meant_{NN} something by x" [Grice (1957), p. 220]. Speakers intend that their utterances will have some consequence as far as their hearers are concerned. But this in itself is not enough to explain the process of communication. By means of a series of examples which he suggests it would not be reasonable to claim as cases of nonnatural meaning, Grice argues that the intention to communicate must be apparent to the audience, and further that the recognition of the communicative intention must itself be the decisive factor in the audience's response. In this way Grice introduces the hearer and the active process of interpretation into his account of how communication works. This

is hardly novel in the context of present-day linguistics, but in terms of the philosophy of language of his day Grice was doing something new.

The second conjunct in Grice's two-part definition of nonnatural meaning takes it beyond an account of individual instances of speaker behaviour and broadens it into a daring suggestion about the nature of linguistic meaning in general. Having defined what a speaker nonnaturally meant by a particular utterance in terms of a set of intentions, Grice proposes to carry this definition over to the meaning of the expression uttered itself. The meanings of linguistic expressions are dependent on the meanings they have when used in context, which in turn is dependent on speaker intention. So linguistic meaning is explained in terms of a mental state or attitude on the part of speakers; it is a psychological property.

Despite its reliance on exposition by means of linguistic examples, its focus on the everyday use of language, and its enthusiasm for philosophical explanations drawing on common sense, "Meaning" contains the germs of two major differences between Grice's approach and OLP. They concern firstly Grice's interest in developing general, explanatory theories and secondly his attempts to reconcile but also to differentiate linguistic meaning and speaker meaning. Grice's psychological account of meaning may have been underdeveloped and sketchy in its presentation, but it was certainly an ambitious attempt to provide a formalised account of an aspect of language, and an answer to a philosophical problem. Austin in general shied away from general theories in favour of localised description. He excelled at compiling lists of linguistic examples and identifying similarities and differences between them. He was reluctant to go beyond such accumulations of data. Even his theory of speech acts, which has proved so fruitful in subsequent linguistic analysis, was developed in his own work little further than a list of types of use to which language is put and the types of linguistic act that can be identified in these uses. Speaking informally long after the event, Grice described his own growing unease with Austin's tendency to proffer 'piecemeal reflections on language', and his own preference for general explanatory accounts, even when this meant the introduction of formal systems or expositions [Grice (1983)]. He outlined such an account in "Meaning", and developed a more formalised theory of meaning in his William James lectures, when he proposed the distinction between 'what is said' and 'what is implicated', together with a structured set of principles for explaining the relationships between the two.

Grice is often credited with being the first clearly to articulate the distinction between literal or linguistic meaning and speaker or contextual meaning, and to make it amenable to rigorous analysis. The William James lectures are most frequently cited in this context, but Grice was already worrying over such a distinction in "Meaning", and here too he was beginning his dissent from OLP. There is some paradox in Austin's relationship to the dis-

tion. In some ways it is implicitly necessary to his development of speech act theory. His account of the speech acts performed by a single utterance included both the locutionary act and the illocutionary act, or both ‘meaning’ and ‘force’ [Austin (1962), p. 100], a classification that would seem to suggest a distinction between the meaning that words intrinsically have and the uses to which they may be put. However, Austin downplayed any suggestion that it might be philosophically expedient to view these as two different levels of significance, or to consider the principles mediating between the two: ‘The total speech act in the total speech situation is the only actual phenomenon which, in the last resort, we are engaged in elucidating’ [Austin (1962), p. 147, original emphasis].

“Meaning” begins Grice’s account of linguistic utterances as much more complex and layered than Austin was prepared to acknowledge. His two-part definition of nonnatural meaning presupposes a distinction between speaker meaning and linguistic meaning. What a speaker means by an utterance depends on a complex set of intentions. In turn the very meaning of the expression uttered might derive from these intentions. Grice was aware of and to some extent uneasy about these two different types of meaning. He battled throughout his preparatory work on meaning with the question of how best to handle the distinction between what a sentence means and what a speaker means in uttering that sentence, and the struggle is apparent in the finished version of “Meaning” itself. He worried that some previous accounts of meaning could handle only ‘standard’ meaning; ‘No provision is made for dealing with statements about what a particular speaker or writer means by a sign on a particular occasion (which may well diverge from the standard meaning of the sign)’ [Grice (1957), pp. 216-7]. These issues were of course to find fuller expression and more detailed explanation in Grice’s William James lectures, and as a result Grice moved even further away from OLP. (For more on Grice’s complicated relationship with OLP see [Chapman (2005)], especially chapters three and four.)

III. PEIRCE’S THEORY OF SIGNS

This question about the distinction between natural and nonnatural meaning is, I think, what people are getting at when they display an interest in a distinction between “natural” and “conventional” signs. But I think my formulation is better [Grice (1957), p. 215].

The impact of OLP on “Meaning”, both positive and negative, remained unspoken and unacknowledged. The impact of the philosophy of signs, or of early work in what we now know as semiology, fared little better. Grice’s curt dismissal of the subject conceals a depth of knowledge of this area of

philosophy. His reference to 'what people are getting at' is vague almost to the point of evasion, but he was well versed in the work of the American pragmatist Ch. S. Peirce; he delivered a series of lectures on Peirce's work during the 1940s in the course of his undergraduate teaching at Oxford.

Peirce's programme was to explain how human beings make sense of their world by means of their interpretation of signs. His classification of signs is complex and intricate, developed over the course of a number of sprawling publications produced in the late nineteenth century. The distinction that has proved most fruitful in subsequent work is his three-way split between icon, index and symbol. These three different types of signs are defined in terms of the manner in which they represent an object to an interpreter. The icon operates as a sign because in some way it resembles what it stands for. The index works because there is some causal link between sign and object (the most familiar example here is a weathercock, which is an indexical sign of wind direction precisely because its position is caused by wind direction). A symbol is not linked to the thing it represents in any necessary way, but depends on convention; the relation of representation to object 'is an imputed character' [Peirce (1867), p. 7]. Words are to be considered as cases of symbols; their arbitrary nature entails that significance is assigned to them by convention.

Grice's major concern in his lectures on Peirce was with the distinction between index and symbol. He was uneasy about a fundamental aspect of Peirce's work: his use is the expression 'is a sign of'. Grice proposed to replace this with 'means'. His ostensible motive for this was entirely in keeping with his background in OLP, with its insistence that philosophers should be guided by everyday usage. Grice argued that Peirce's use of 'sign' was technical and artificial, unrecognisable in relation to the ordinary use of the expression: 'in general the use (unannounced) of technical or crypto-technical terms leads to nothing but trouble, obscuring proper questions and raising improper ones' [Grice (c1948)]. The proper questions that the use of 'means' instead of 'is a sign of' made possible concerned the specific differences between Peirce's categories of index and symbol, and pointed towards the development of the ideas that would find expression in "Meaning".

Grice took Peirce's example 'The position of the weathercock was a sign that the wind was NE' and translated it into 'The position of the weathercock meant that the wind was NE'. He then drew attention to some specific properties of this type of meaning. Most significantly, if the new example sentence were true, then it must also be the case that the wind really was NE; that is, the truth of the sentence as a whole entails the truth of the subclause. This observation in turn allowed Grice to highlight a distinction between this use of 'meant' and a different use of the same word, one which relates to Peirce's category of symbol. Grice suggested a conversation at a bus stop after a bus has left. 'Those three rings on the bell meant that the bus was full'

could coherently be followed by the question ‘was it full?’ That is, in the cases of meaning that would fall into Peirce’s category of symbols, the truth of the statement as a whole does not entail the truth of its subclause. In effect, in these early lectures Grice was supporting Peirce’s distinction between index and symbol, but dispensing with Peirce’s central terminology of signs and replacing it with an account of meaning. Grice’s work on this, informed and underscored by Peirce’s theory of signs is apparent in the central distinction in “Meaning” between natural and nonnatural meaning.

IV. CONVENTION AND INTENTION

Intention predominates in Grice’s account of meaning at the expense of convention. Most philosophical accounts of meaning to date had taken at least some account of the notion of the conventional meaning associated with words and expressions, existing independently of individual contexts. Peirce’s equation of words with symbols, and his ascription of a conventional character to symbols, had ensured that within the philosophy of signs linguistic meaning was seen as conventional. The only fellow philosopher that Grice mentions by name and quotes in “Meaning” is C.L. Stevenson. A few years before Grice first presented his account, Stevenson too had distinguished between natural and linguistic meaning. He suggested a causal account, in which meaning was to be defined in terms of the tendency to produce particular attitudes in an audience, and to be produced in response to certain attitudes in a speaker. Nevertheless, the distinguishing feature of linguistic meaning was that it was dependent on convention. In context, expressions may acquire significances or suggestions that go beyond the conventional, but conventional meaning would always be independent and prior. ‘John is a remarkable athlete’ may tend to make hearers believe that John is tall ‘but we would not ordinarily say that it “meant” anything about tallness, even though it “suggested” it’ [Stevenson (1944), p. 38].

Austin’s theory of speech acts provides another obvious point of comparison with Grice’s account of meaning. The two theories seem to have developed at very much the same time. Speech act theory found its widest public audience in Austin’s William James lectures at Harvard in 1955, but these lectures reported on work that had been in progress since the mid 1940s. Austin’s work was motivated by his rejection of what he described as the ‘descriptive fallacy’ in much earlier philosophy. This was the argument, or more often the implicit assumption, that the only philosophically interesting function of language was that of making statements of fact. Austin urged philosophers to consider the range of uses to which language is actually put, and to define language in these terms. In the most developed form of speech act theory he distinguished between the locutionary act ‘which is roughly

equivalent to uttering a certain sentence with a certain sense and reference, which again is roughly equivalent to "meaning" in the traditional sense', illocutionary acts 'i.e. utterances which have a certain (conventional) force' and perlocutionary acts: 'what we bring about or achieve by saying something' [Austin (1962), p. 108, original emphasis]. A reliance on the existence of conventional meaning runs through Austin's description of these levels.

Grice's implicit rejection of convention as the driving force behind linguistic meaning was undoubtedly his boldest move in "Meaning". Reactions to Grice's article, or more specifically Grice's attempts to reformulated his ideas in response to these reactions, have suggested to some that it was also the feature that made his programme ultimately untenable. It certainly made it innovative, provocative and above all suggestive of new ways of thinking about language. His introduction of intention as the defining criterion of meaning is somewhat caged and defensive. Towards the end of "Meaning" he suggests that:

Now some questions may be raised about my use, fairly free, of such words as "intention" and "recognition". I must disclaim any intention of peopling all our talking life with armies of complicated psychological occurrences. I do not hope to solve any philosophical puzzles about intending, but I do want briefly to argue that no special difficulties are raised by my use of the word "intention" in connection with meaning [Grice (1957), pp. 221-2].

He ends his article with an expansion on this last point; linguistic intentions are much like any other sort of intentions. Grice's sensitivity to possible criticisms may be explained by the fact that intention would have been familiar to his original Oxford audience as an established topic of philosophical inquiry. Here the trend was to try as far as possible to reduce the number of different posited psychological states and to suggest general reductive explanations rather than *ad hoc* responses. The introduction of any psychological state into a philosophical discussion was generally mistrusted because psychological states were seen as personal, subjective and therefore unverifiable.

Grice was in fact developing his own account of intention. He later commented that his intentional account of meaning was inspired in part by G.F. Stout's article 'Voluntary action', published in *Mind* in 1896. In this, Stout suggested that unlike in the more general case of desire, in the case of volition there was a necessary particular type of belief, that 'so far as in us lies, we shall bring about the attainment of the desired end' [Stout (1896), p. 356]. The evidence on which a speaker basis a statement of volition is not empirical; it draws on the speaker's psychological state without reference to external circumstances. In an unpublished paper completed a few years after "Meaning", Grice proposed to adopt this as part of a definition of the psychological concept of intention. He added to it the specification that the speaker

must be honestly ready to take all apparent necessary steps to fulfill the intended action. He also suggested, although without justification or elaboration, that intention might prove illuminating with respect to the definitions of other psychological states [Grice (c1950)]. In “Meaning” he used a philosophically informed notion of intention in a formal exposition of meaning as speaker intention.

The subsumption of conventional meaning into speaker meaning and hence into intention appears in “Meaning” as a hope or an ideal rather than a finished process. Grice suggests that an explanation of ‘A meant_{NN} something by x (on a particular occasion) [...] might reasonably be expected to help us with ‘x means_{NN} (timeless) something (that so-and-so)’ and therefore with an account of expressions such as ‘means the same as’ [Grice (1957) p. 217]. Grice was hinting at some of the major issues in the philosophy of language of his time, such as the nature of synonymy, and hence of the viability of a distinction between analytic and synthetic statements. The major question here was whether expressions can legitimately be claimed to have meanings that can be objectively compared and categorised, independent of individual instances of usage. Grice was not attempting to deny the existence of this type of conventional meaning, but rather hinting that it might ultimately be shown to presuppose, rather than to be presupposed by, speaker intention.

V. CONTEMPORARY REACTIONS TO “MEANING”

This section will focus on just a few contemporary reactions to “Meaning”. The term ‘contemporary’ is here interpreted broadly. The most salient responses were not necessarily those published very soon after “Meaning” appeared in print, but those that Grice was aware of soon enough to inform the subsequent development of his ideas. In particular, he drew on suggestions made to him by Stephen Schiffer, Peter Strawson and John Searle.

Contemporary responses generally picked up on one or both of the features of “Meaning” identified above as novel and therefore controversial. That is, firstly Grice introduced hearers into the definition of nonnatural meaning, with resultant complex layers of intentions. Secondly, he suggested that those intentions might take precedence over convention in an account of linguistic meaning itself. Responses to the introduction of hearers had little significant impact on Grice’s subsequent work; he was in fact rather dismissive of them and the problems they purported to present him. Responses to the proposal to define linguistic meaning in intentional terms fed into Grice’s reevaluation of his account of meaning, and hence indirectly into the subsequent development of the debate in linguistics over the distinction between semantics and pragmatics.

Strawson and Schiffer both urged the importance of conventional meaning. Schiffer argued that the nature of the expression uttered was always relevant: 'One must utter *x* with the relevant intentions, and not any value of "*x*" will be appropriate to this end: I could not in ordinary circumstances request you to pass the salt by uttering "the flamingoes are flying south early this year"' [Schiffer (1972) p. 13]. In a comparison of work by Grice and Austin, Strawson saw "Meaning" as a useful complement to speech act theory. Austin had identified locutionary acts, dependent on conventions of the language, and illocutionary forces, dependent on a different set of conventions of use. Strawson argued that illocutionary forces could not in fact always be explained in terms of conventions. The difference between an order and an entreaty, for instance, might often be dependent on no more than the state of mind of a speaker. Strawson proposed that a version of Grice's intentional account might be employed to explain the relationship between locution and illocution when conventions could not. To Strawson at least, Austin's conventional account was certainly compatible with Grice's intentional account. In fact, in a slightly late commentary he placed Austin and Grice on the same side in what he describes as the 'Homeric struggle' between 'the theorists of communication-intention and the theorists of formal semantics' [Strawson (1969), pp. 171-2]. Austin and Grice were both at odds with any definition of meaning as dependent on the semantic rules of the language. This incompatibility was a major concern of Searle, for whom language was primarily a rule-governed phenomenon. This conviction led him to a more radical critique and proposed modification of Grice's account of meaning than either Schiffer or Strawson.

Searle's critique of "Meaning" is the one that has arguably had the most impact on the subsequent status of Grice's intentional account. It also contains what is probably the best known of the many counter examples that his critics have put forward. Searle's 'American soldier' example is one of the least elaborate and torturous of these counter examples, and for that reason one of the most compelling. It goes as follows. An American soldier is captured during the Second World War by Italian troops. He decides that his best chance of survival is to convince his captors that he is a German soldier, but he does not speak Italian well enough to be able to attempt to tell them this directly. He is aware that the Italian soldiers holding him speak no German, and the only German that he himself can remember is one line of poetry: 'Kennst du das Land wo die Zitronen blühen?'. The line in fact means 'Knowest thou the land where the lemon trees bloom?', but the American soldier's hope is that the Italians will assume that it means 'I am a German soldier' and therefore let him go. Searle argues that this example displays all the necessary features to qualify as a piece of Gricean nonnatural meaning. The speaker intends that the hearers will recognise his intention to make them believe that he is a German soldier, and further intends that the recognition of

this communicative intention should be the very reason why they come to this belief. Nevertheless, Searle argues, it would hardly be a comfortable conclusion to decide that when the soldier utters ‘Kennst du das Land wo die Zitronen blühen?’ he actually nonnaturally means ‘I am a German soldier’.

Searle’s response to his own example is that, even in the context he has described, the American soldier’s utterance nonnaturally means ‘Knowest thou the land where the lemon trees bloom?’. This is dictated by the rules of the German language, and cannot be altered by the soldier’s deceptive intentions on this occasion, even if they are successful. Grice’s account leads to unacceptable conclusions in cases such as this, Searle argues, because “Meaning” is more than a matter of intention, it is also at least sometimes a matter of convention’ [Searle (1969) p. 45]. He therefore proposes to bring the notion of convention into an intentional account, to allow for the role played by the rules of the language in question. Semantic rules specify the meaning of a particular expression prior to any individual context. They place restrictions on what a speaker can legitimately intend in uttering an expression; part of the speaker’s intention is that the hearer should recognise the intention to communicate on the basis of linguistic rules that are in place and specify how the expression is to be used. The marginalising of convention was what had originally made Grice’s account so bold. Searle was proposing to return it to a central position in the definition of meaning.

VI. GRICE’S RESPONSE

If the date of publication of “Meaning” is misleading, then so too are the dates usually associated with Grice’s theory of conversation. Grice first made his ideas about implicatures public when he was invited to give the William James lectures at Harvard in 1967. They were circulated in mimeograph form for some years with this date, until the single lecture ‘Logic and conversation’ was published in 1975. Other lectures were published individually during the 1970s and 1980s, but they did not appear together in print until *Studies in the way of words* in 1989. These dates all disguise the fact that Grice was working on his new account of meaning, and in particular on his distinction between ‘what is said’ and ‘what is implicated’, for many years.

Grice kept the role of the hearer as one of primary importance in his theory of conversation. The property of conversational implicature that has since become known as ‘calculability’ is hearer-centred; it emphasises the role of the hearer in recovering the meaning intended by the speaker by means of various clues. Here is Grice’s formulation of the process the hearer must go through:

To work out that a particular conversational implicature is present, the hearer will rely on the following data: (1) the conventional meaning of the words used, together with the identity of any references that may be involved; (2) the Cooperative Principle and its maxims; (3) the context, linguistic or otherwise, of the utterance; (4) other items of background knowledge; and (5) the fact (or supposed fact) that all relevant items falling under the previous headings are available to both participants and both participants know or assume this to be the case [Grice (1975), p. 31].

This account is telling of the direction in which Grice's thinking had moved. Certainly he had retained the hearer as an active participant in the process of communication, had elaborated on the importance of context and of background knowledge, and had added the specifics of the cooperative principle and maxims. But he had also afforded a much more explicit role for conventional linguistic meaning, which formed a crucial part of the evidence on which the hearer was to identify the message that the speaker was conveying.

In this Grice could be seen as having gone some distance towards the position advocated by Searle: the incorporation of conventional meaning in an account otherwise dependent on the recognition of intention. Indeed, during the fifth William James lectures he proposes to introduce the meaning of an expression ('S') in some linguistic system into his account: 'So "U said that p" may finally come out as meaning: "U did something x (1) by which U centrally meant that p (2) which is an occurrence of a type S part of the meaning of which is 'p'"' [Grice (1969), p. 88]. But Grice had not been phased by Searle's counter example. He argued that to point out the meaning of the line of poetry itself was not a relevant argument, since to say that the American soldier nonnaturally meant 'I am a German soldier' (which Grice changes in his exposition to 'I am a German officer') was not the same as saying that he nonnaturally meant this by the line he used. 'If the American could be said to have meant that he was a German officer, he would have meant that by saying the line, or by saying the line in a particular way' [Grice (1969), p. 102]. So Grice brought his own distinction between a sentence and the use of a sentence to bear to ward off Searle's attack; it may well be possible that the American soldier nonnaturally meant 'I am a German soldier', but that is not at all the same as claiming that the line of poetry that he uttered nonnaturally meant this.

This distinction between a sentence and the use of a sentence, or between linguistic meaning and speaker meaning, had been at the heart of Grice's thinking since the writing and later the publication of "Meaning". Its increasing importance for Grice explains the low key reintroduction of convention into an account of meaning from which he had apparently ousted it. He was attempting to do many things by positing the two distinct levels 'what is said' and 'what is implicated'. In the first instance, he was interested

in solving some long-standing problems about the apparent discrepancies between logical connective and their natural language counterparts. If the logical meaning could be shown to be that specified by the semantics of the expression, and the apparent discrepancies could be shown to be based on other factors, principled and regular but concerned with the use of language rather than with language itself, then the apparent problems were dissolved. The system that emerged allowed Grice to describe other things too, such as the nature of and the reason for differences between literal and metaphorical meaning, and the workings of sarcasm and insinuation. But the distinction itself needed to be sustained by a difference between the process by which linguistic meaning was established and that by which implicated meaning could be calculated, and it was here that convention became necessary. It is present, in a typically hedged and tentative manner, in Grice's definition of 'what is said': 'In the sense in which I am using the word say, I intend what someone has said to be closely related to the conventional meaning of the words (the sentence) he has uttered' [Grice (1975), p. 25].

Grice's explicit inclusion of convention in his later account of meaning might appear to be a concession to his critics that changed the nature of his programme. To some of his later commentators it amounted to a climb down that undid much of what was original and exciting in "Meaning". Grice himself certainly did not see it this way. He was convinced of the essential continuity of his thought, with the theory of conversation emerging out of his battles over how to distinguish between what he originally termed 'timeless meaning' and 'speaker meaning'. The William James lectures offer a clearer account of speaker meaning than was achieved in "Meaning", together with a more systematic account of how this is linked to conventional meaning. For Grice convention was far from sufficient in explaining how meaning is achieved in everyday communication, and it was itself not a unitary phenomenon. It was in large part responsible for 'what is said' on any occasion, but it also gave rise to other aspects of meaning: conventional implicatures that were associated with the uses of particular words, but were not part of what the speaker might be taken literally to have said. What is more Grice was arguing that speaker meaning, for all its apparent unruliness, could be described in a systematic manner, and could be explained by means of a series of principles that showed its relation to but also its difference from conventional linguistic meaning.

VII. RECENT ASSESSMENTS OF "MEANING"

Grice's distinction between sentence meaning and speaker meaning, explored tentatively in "Meaning" and developed in more detail in the William James lectures, has undoubtedly been his greatest single intellectual leg-

acy. It has been credited by many commentators as one of the founding influences in the development of the present day discipline of pragmatics. Perhaps paradoxically the distinction, and in particular the question of primacy between intentional and conventional meaning, remained one of the least clearly elaborated aspects of his work. Towards the end of his life, he declared it to have been the philosophical problem that had given him most trouble.

Recent commentators on "Meaning" have been divided over the question of its success, or more specifically over whether its original insights survived the elaborations and modifications of the William James lectures. Anita Avramides, in her extended reflection on "Meaning" suggests that the intentional account of meaning can coexist successfully with a notion of conventional meaning: 'Grice's work on meaning is, I believe, of a hearty nature and can endure alteration and modification without becoming obsolete' [Avramides (1989), p. 39]. Brian Loar has supported Grice's original insight against criticisms that, without acknowledging it, it depends on a notion of pre-existing linguistic meaning: 'the basic illumination shed by Grice's account of speaker's meaning does not depend on such precise conceptual explication' [Loar (2001), p. 104]. In a recent re-assessment of what he calls the 'mind-first' view of the relationship between linguistic meaning and the intentionality of thoughts, Martin Davies considers Grice's work as a whole and comments that 'the mind-first view finds its boldest and most sophisticated development in the work of Paul Grice' [Davies (2006), p. 30].

Others have been less sanguine about the coherence of Grice's programme. Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson's development of 'relevance theory' is often described as an alternative version to, or a detailed elaboration of, Grice's theory of conversation. However, they themselves make clear that they find "Meaning" more compelling, and worry that in his later work Grice abandoned what was most admirable in that article. They do not agree with Grice's hope that an analysis of speaker meaning could ultimately explain the nature of linguistic sentence meaning. They do, however, argue that Grice's attempt could provide the basis for an inferential model of communication. 'Grice's original idea, as presented in his 1957 paper, can thus be seen as an attempt to rehabilitate a commonsense view of communication and spell it out in theoretically acceptable terms. However, the elaboration of this idea in the work of Grice himself, Strawson, Searle, Schiffer and others has often taken the form of a move away from common sense, away from psychological plausibility, and back to the code model' [Sperber and Wilson (1995), p. 24]. Sperber and Wilson go on to elaborate a model of communication in which semantic input is minimal and communication is achieved through processes of inferencing based on a presumption of optimal relevance.

One recent development in linguistics that might have been expected to be more sympathetic to Grice's enterprise is integrationism. According to this, it is a fallacy to discuss linguistic meaning as in any sense existing independ-

ently from or determining what is communicated in individual contexts. As far as it is possible to discuss meaning, this can be done only in relation to the way it is created on each particular occasion that a person speaks. So here the psychological states of speaker and hearer would seem to be primary, at the expense of any notion of a pre-existing or conventional meaning. But Roy Harris, the leading proponent of integrationism, is not enthusiastic about Grice. He takes issue with Grice's intentional account because it depends on a distinction between natural and nonnatural meaning, and Harris's integrationist stance makes such a distinction untenable. The whole programme of analysing communication in terms of intentions 'turns out to be one more version of the view that signs (the three rings on the bell, the photograph, "redouble", etc.) are just instruments, already "available" for use' [Harris (1996), p. 57]. It seems that Harris does not even have to consult Grice's later elaborations in the William James lectures to find an unacceptable reliance on autonomous, conventional meaning.

Grice's short article drew on his familiarity with a range of contemporary and recent philosophy. This philosophy is not always clearly signposted in the article itself, but it helped to shape his thinking, which in turn has had a considerable impact on the development of much subsequent work on meaning in both philosophy and linguistics. "Meaning" itself has received most attention in philosophy, where it is generally treated as perhaps the first concerted attempt to explain meaning in terms of intentions, and hence in terms of psychological states. In linguistics it has generally been overshadowed by the more substantial and suggestive lectures on 'Logic and conversation'. Those commentators who have considered it in its own right have often been concerned by the tension between the apparent desire to give meaning an entirely psychological definition and the persistent notion of what is conventional in meaning. Yet this tension, which was never fully resolved, lies at the very heart of the fresh perspective on meaning that has made Grice's work so influential in linguistics. "Meaning" is worth revisiting in its jubilee year because it documents where Grice's most influential ideas began and because it contains the clearest expression of the hope, which he never fully abandoned, that sentence meaning might ultimately be explicable in terms of speaker intention.

The School of English
University of Liverpool
Modern Languages Building, Chatham Street
Liverpool, L69 7ZR, UK
E-mail: src@liverpool.ac.uk

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