Pragmatics and the Philosophy of Language

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Many topics in the philosophy of language pertain to pragmatics and there are many to which pragmatics pertains. Ones of the first sort, in PHILOSOPHY OF PRAGMATICS, include performatives, speech acts, communication, conversational implicature, and the question of how to distinguish pragmatic from semantic matters. Topics of the second sort, in APPLIED PRAGMATICS, concern various terms, distinctions, and problems of philosophical interest. Our survey of them will illustrate how certain seemingly semantic problems can be resolved by enforcing a cogent semantic-pragmatic distinction, for in many cases apparent matters of meaning turn out to be matters of use.

0. Brief Background

During the first half of the twentieth century, philosophy of language was generally concerned less with language use than with meanings of linguistic expressions. Indeed, meanings were abstracted from the linguistic items that have them, and (indicative) sentences were often equated with statements, which in turn were equated with propositions. Although Frege, the founder of modern philosophy of language, noted various respects in which there is more to the total signification of an utterance than the thought it expresses, he was mainly concerned with the latter. And it is no exaggeration to say that such philosophers as Russell and the early Wittgenstein paid only lip service to natural language, never mind its use, for they were more interested in deep and still daunting problems about representation, which they hoped to solve by studying the properties of ideal (“logically perfect”) languages, in which forms of sentences mirror the forms of what sentences symbolize. Russell, with his logical atomism, and Wittgenstein, with his picture theory of meaning, neglected non-assertive uses of language, as did philosophers generally. As Austin complains at the beginning of How to Do Things with Words, it was assumed by philosophers (he had the logical positivists in mind, like Schlick, Carnap, and Ayer) that “the business of a [sentence] can only be to ‘describe’ some state of affairs, or to ‘state some fact,’ which it must do either truly or falsely” (1962, p.1).

Austin and the later Wittgenstein changed all that. Austin observed that there are many uses of language which have the linguistic appearance of fact-stating but are really quite different.
Explicit performatives like “You’re fired” and “I quit” are not used to make mere statements. And the Wittgenstein of the *Philosophical Investigations* (1953), rebelling against his former self, swapped the picture metaphor for the tool metaphor and came to think of language not as a system of representation but as a system of devices for engaging in various sorts of social activity. “Don’t ask for the meaning, ask for the use,” he urged.

Here he went too far, for there is good reason to separate the theory of linguistic meaning (semantics) from the theory of language use (pragmatics), not that they are unconnected. We can distinguish sentences, considered in abstraction from their use, and the acts speakers (or writers) perform in using them. We can distinguish what sentences mean from what speakers mean in using them. Whereas Wittgenstein adopted a decidedly anti-theoretical stance toward the whole subject, Austin developed a systematic, though largely taxonomic, theory of language use. And Grice developed a conception of meaning which, though tied to use, enforced a distinction between what linguistic expressions and what speakers mean in using them.¹

A early but excellent illustration of the importance of this distinction is provided by Moore’s paradox (so-called by Wittgenstein, 1953: 190). If you say, “Pigs swim but I don’t believe it,” you are denying that you believe what you are asserting. This contradiction seemed paradoxical because it is not logical in character. That pigs swim (if they do) does not entail your believing it, nor vice versa, and there’s no contradiction in MY saying, “Pigs swim but you don’t believe it.” Your inconsistency arises not from what you are claiming but that you are claiming it. That’s what makes it a **pragmatic** contradiction.

Whereas semantic information is carried by linguistic items themselves, pragmatic information is generated by, or at least made relevant by, the act of uttering them. Thus phenomena to be considered in Part I, including performatives, illocutionary acts, communicating, and implicating, are essentially pragmatic phenomena. And the approach to various philosophical issues in Part II exploit this distinction, often illustrating that apparent matters of linguistic meaning are really matters of use.
1. Philosophy of Pragmatics

1.1 Speech acts and communication

This section is intended to complement the Speech Acts and Implicature in Part I of this volume. From a philosophical point of view, the important questions concern three relationships: between explicit performatives and illocutionary acts generally, between illocutionary acts and communicative intentions, and between what a speaker says and what he thereby intends to communicate. A somewhat historical approach to these topics, through the work of Austin, Strawson, and Grice, will perhaps shed some conceptual light on the main issues they raise.

1.1.1 Performatives and illocutionary force

Paradoxical though it may seem, there are certain things one can do just by saying that one is doing them. One can apologize by saying “I apologize,” promise by saying “I promise,” and thank someone by saying “Thank you.” These are examples of explicit performatives, statements in form but not in fact. Or so thought their discoverer, J. L. Austin (1962), who contrasted them with constatives. Performatives are utterances whereby we make explicit what we are doing.2 Austin challenged the common philosophical assumption (or at least pretense) that indicative sentences are necessarily devices for making statements. He maintained that, for example, an explicit promise is not, and does not involve, the statement that one is promising. It is an act of a distinctive sort, the very sort (promising) named by the performative verb. Of course one can promise without doing so explicitly, without using the performative verb promise, but if one does use it, one is, according to Austin, making explicit what one is doing but not stating that one is doing it.3

Austin came to realize that explicit constatives function just like them. After all, a statement can be made by using a phrase like “I assert …” or “I predict …”, just as a promise or a request can be made by means of “I promise …” or “I request …”. In later chapters of How to Do Things with Words the distinction between constative and performative utterances is superseded by the one between locutionary and illocutionary acts, and included among the latter, along with promises, requests, etc., are assertions, predictions, etc., for which Austin retains the term “constative.” The newer nomenclature takes into account the fact that
Illocutionary acts need not be performed explicitly — you don’t have to use “I suggest …” to make a suggestion or “I apologize …” to apologize.

Even so, it might seem that because of their distinctive self-referential character, the force of explicit performatives requires special explanation. Indeed, Austin supposed that illocutionary acts in general should be understood on the model of explicit performatives, as when he made the mysterious remark that the use of a sentence with a certain illocutionary force is “conventional in the sense that at least it could be made explicit by the performative formula” (1962: 91). Presumably he thought that explicit performative utterances are conventional in some more straightforward sense. Since it is not part of the meaning of the word “apologize” that an utterance “I apologize …” count as an apology rather than a statement, perhaps there is some convention to that effect. If there is, presumably it is part of a general convention that covers all performative verbs. But is there such a convention, and is it needed to explain performativity?

Strawson (1964) argued that Austin was overly impressed with institution-bound cases. In these cases there do seem to be conventions that utterances of certain forms (an umpire’s “Out!”, a legislator’s “Nay!”, or a judge’s “Overruled!”) count as the performance of acts of certain sorts. Likewise with certain explicit performatives, as when under the appropriate circumstances a judge or clergyman says, “I pronounce you husband and wife,” which counts as joining a couple in marriage. In such cases there are specific, socially recognized circumstances in which a person with specific, socially recognized authority may perform an act of a certain sort by uttering words of a certain form. But Strawson argued that most illocutionary acts involve not an intention to conform to an institutional convention but an intention to communicate something to an audience. Indeed, as he pointed out, there is no sense of the word conventional in which the use of a given sentence with a certain illocutionary force is necessarily conventional, much less a sense having to do with the fact that this force can be “made explicit by the performative formula.” In the relevant sense, an act is conventional just in case it counts as an act of a certain sort because, and only because, of a special kind of institutional rule, what Searle (1969) called a constitutive rule, to that effect. However, in contrast to the special cases Austin focused on, Strawson points out the obvious fact that utterances can count as requests, apologies, or predictions, as the case may be, without the benefit of such a rule. It is perfectly possible to apologize, for example, without doing so
explicitly, without using the performative phrase “I apologize ...”. That is the trouble with Austin’s view of speech acts—and for that matter Searle’s, which attempts to explain illocutionary forces by means of constitutive rules for using FORCE-INDICATING DEVICES, such as performatives. These theories can’t explain the presence of illocutionary forces in the absence of such devices. There is a superficial difference between apologizing explicitly (by saying, “I apologize”) and doing it inexplicitly, but there is no theoretically important difference. Performativity requires no special explanation, much less a special sort of convention. Could such conventions be suitably generalized? The variety of linguistic forms usable for the performance of a given sort of illocutionary act seems too open-ended to be explained by any convention (or set of conventions) that specifies just those linguistic forms whose utterance counts as the performance of an act of that sort.

1.1.2 Types of speech acts

In this section we will spell out Austin’s distinction between locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts, classify types of illocutionary acts, and draw the further distinction between direct, indirect, and nonliteral illocutionary acts. This taxonomizing will serve to pinpoint the locus and role of communicative intentions in the total speech act.

1.1.2.1 Locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts

When one acts intentionally, generally one has a set of nested intentions. For instance, having arrived home without one’s keys, one might move one’s finger in a certain way with the intention not just of moving one’s finger in that way but with the further intentions of pushing a certain button, ringing the doorbell, arousing one’s spouse, ..., and ultimately getting into one’s house. The single bodily movement involved in moving one’s finger comprises a multiplicity of actions, each corresponding to a different one of the nested intentions. Similarly, speech acts are not just acts of producing certain sounds.

Austin identifies three distinct levels of action beyond the act of utterance itself. He distinguishes the act of saying something, what one does IN saying it, and what one does BY saying it, and dubs these the LOCUTIONARY, the ILOCUTIONARY and the PERLOCUTIONARY act, respectively. Suppose, for example, that a bartender utters the words, “The bar will be closed in five minutes,” reportable with direct quotation. He is thereby performing the locutionary act of saying that the bar (i.e., the one he is tending) will be closed in five minutes (from the time of
utterance), where what is said is reported by indirect quotation (notice that what the bartender
is saying, the content of his locutionary act, is not fully determined by the words he is using,
for they do not specify the bar in question or the time of the utterance). In saying this, the
bartender is performing the illocutionary act of informing the patrons of the bar’s imminent
closing and perhaps also the act of urging them to order a last drink. Whereas the upshot of
these illocutionary acts is understanding on the part of the audience, perlocutionary acts are
performed with the intention of producing a further effect. The bartender intends to be
performing the perlocutionary acts of causing the patrons to believe that the bar is about to
close and of getting them to want and to order one last drink. He is performing all these speech
acts, at all three levels, just by uttering certain words.

1.1.2.2 Classifying illocutionary acts

Utterances are generally more than just acts of communication. They have more than
illocutionary force. When you apologize, for example, you may intend not merely to express
your regret but also to seek forgiveness. Seeking forgiveness is to be distinguished from
apologizing, even though the one utterance is the performance of an act of both types. As an
apology, the utterance succeeds if it is taken as expressing regret for the deed in question; as an
act of seeking forgiveness, it succeeds if forgiveness is thereby obtained. Speech acts, being
perlocutionary as well as illocutionary, generally have some ulterior purpose, but they are
distinguished primarily by their illocutionary type, such as asserting, requesting, promising,
and apologizing, which in turn may be distinguished by the type of attitude expressed. The
perlocutionary act is essentially a matter of trying to get the hearer to form some correlative
attitude. Here are some typical examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ILLOCUTIONARY ACT</th>
<th>ATTITUDE EXPRESSED</th>
<th>INTENDED HEARER ATTITUDE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>statement</td>
<td>belief that p</td>
<td>belief that p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>request</td>
<td>desire for H to D</td>
<td>intention to D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>promise</td>
<td>firm intention to D</td>
<td>belief that S will D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>apology</td>
<td>regret for D-ing</td>
<td>forgiveness of S for D-ing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These are examples of the four major categories of communicative illocutionary acts, which may be called CONSTATIVES, DIRECTIVES, COMMISSIVES, and ACKNOWLEDGMENTS. Here are some further examples of each type:

**Constatives:** affirming, alleging, announcing, answering, attributing, claiming, classifying, concurring, confirming, conjecturing, denying, disagreeing, disclosing, disputing, identifying, informing, insisting, predicting, ranking, reporting, stating, stipulating

**Directives:** advising, admonishing, asking, begging, dismissing, excusing, forbidding, instructing, ordering, permitting, requesting, requiring, suggesting, urging, warning

**Commissives:** agreeing, betting, guaranteeing, inviting, offering, promising, swearing, volunteering

**Acknowledgments:** apologizing, condoling, congratulating, greeting, thanking, accepting (acknowledging an acknowledgment)

Conventional illocutionary acts, the model for Austin’s theory, succeed not by recognition of intention, but by conformity to convention. That is, an utterance counts as an act of a certain sort by virtue of meeting certain socially or institutionally recognized conditions for being an act of that sort. They fall into two categories, EFFECTIVES and VERDICTIVES, depending on whether they effect an institutional state of affairs or merely make an official judgment as to an institutionally relevant state of affairs. Here are a few examples of each:

**Effectives:** banning, bidding, censuring, dubbing, enjoining, firing, indicting, moving, nominating, pardoning, penalizing, promoting, seconding, sentencing, suspending, vetoing, voting

**Verdictives:** acquitting, assessing, calling (by an umpire or referee), certifying, convicting, grading, judging, ranking, rating, ruling

1.1.2.3 *Direct, indirect, and nonliteral illocutionary acts*

What is said, the content of a locutionary act, does not determine the illocutionary act(s) being performed. Just in shaking hands we can, depending on the circumstances, do any one of several different things: introduce ourselves, greet each other, seal a deal, congratulate, or bid farewell, so a given sentence can be used in a variety of ways. For example, “I will call a lawyer” could be used as a prediction, a promise, or a warning. In general, we can perform an
illocutionary act (1) directly or indirectly, by way of performing another illocutionary act, (2) literally or nonliterally, depending on how we are using our words, and (3) explicitly or inexplicitly, depending on whether we fully spell out what we mean.

These three contrasts are distinct and should not be confused. The first two concern the relation between the utterance and the illocutionary act(s) thereby performed. In INDIRECTION a single utterance is the performance of one illocutionary act by way of performing another. For example, we can make a request or give permission by way of making a statement, say by uttering “It’s getting cold in here” or “I don’t mind,” and we can make a statement or give an order by way of asking a question, such as “Is the Pope Catholic?” or “Can you open the door?” When an illocutionary act is performed indirectly, it is performed by way of performing some other one directly. In the case of nonliteral utterances, we do not mean what our words mean but something else instead. With NONLITERALITY the force or the content of the illocutionary act being performed is not the one that would be predicted just from the meanings of the words being used, as with likely utterances of “My mind got derailed” or “You can stick that in your ear.” Occasionally utterances are both nonliteral and indirect. For example, one might utter “I love the sound of your voice” to tell someone nonliterally (ironically) that she can’t stand the sound of his voice and thereby indirectly to ask him to stop singing.

Nonliterality and indirection are two well-known ways in which the semantic content of a sentence can fail to determine the full force and content of the illocutionary act being performed in using the sentence. They rely on the same sorts of processes that Grice (1975) discovered in connection with what he called CONVERSATIONAL IMPLICATURE, which, as is clear from Grice’s examples, is nothing more than the special case of nonliteral or indirect constatives made with the use of indicative sentences. A few of Grice’s examples illustrate nonliterality, e.g., “He was a little intoxicated,” but most of them are indirect statements, e.g., “There is a garage around the corner,” used to tell someone where to get gas, and “Mr. X’s command of English is excellent, and his attendance has been regular,” used to give a weak recommendation. These are all examples in which what is meant is not determined by what is said. However, Grice overlooks a different kind of case, marked by the third contrast listed above.

There are many sentences whose standard uses are not strictly determined by their meanings but are not oblique (implicature-producing) or figurative uses either. For example, if
one’s spouse says “I will be home later” she is likely to mean that she will be home later that night, not merely at some time in the future. In such cases what one means is what I call (Bach 1994) an EXPANSION of what one says, in that adding more words (tonight, in the example) would have made what was meant fully explicit. In other cases, such as ‘Jack is ready’ and ‘Jill is late’, the sentence does not express a complete proposition. There must be something which Jack is being claimed to be ready for and something which Jill is being claimed to be late to. In these cases what one means is a COMPLETION of what one says. In both sorts of case, no particular word or phrase is being used nonliterally and there is no indirection. Both exemplify what I call conversational IMPLICITURE, since part of what is meant is communicated not explicitly but implicitly, by way of expansion or completion. Completion and expansion are both processes whereby the hearer supplies missing portions of what is otherwise being expressed explicitly. With completion a propositional radical is filled in, and with expansion a complete but skeletal proposition is fleshed out. The character of the inference in these cases is distinct from that of the inference to the content of an indirect illocutionary act (such as an implicature) or the figurative content of a nonliteral utterance. In these cases, instead of building on what the speaker has made explicit, the hearer infers a distinct proposition.

1.1.3 Communication and speech acts

The taxonomy laid out above assumes that Strawson was right to claim that most illocutionary acts are performed not with an intention to conform to a convention but with an audience-directed communicative intention. But why are illocutionary acts generally communicative, and what exactly is a communicative intention?

1.1.3.1 Communicative speech acts

Pretheoretically, we think of an act of communication, linguistic or otherwise, as an act of expressing oneself. This rather vague idea can be made more precise if we get more specific about what is expressed. Take the case of an apology. If you utter, “[I’m] sorry I forgot your birthday” and intend this as an apology, you are expressing regret for something, in this case for forgetting the person’s birthday. An apology just IS the act of (verbally) expressing regret for, and thereby acknowledging, something one did that might have harmed or at least bothered the hearer. It is communicative because it is intended to be taken as expressing a certain attitude, in this case regret. It succeeds as such if it is so taken, in which case one has made
oneself understood. Using a special device such as the performative “I apologize” may of
course facilitate understanding — understanding is correlative with communicating — but in
general this is unnecessary. Communicative success is achieved if the speaker chooses his
words in such a way that the hearer will, under the circumstances of utterance, recognize his
communicative intention. So, for example, if you spill some beer on someone and say “Oops”
in the right way, your utterance will be taken as an apology.

If each type of illocutionary act is distinguishable by the type of attitude expressed, there is
no need to invoke the notion of convention to explain how it can succeed. It succeeds if the
hearer recognizes the attitude being expressed, such as a belief in the case of a statement and a
desire in the case of a request. Any further effect that it has on the hearer, such as being
believed or being complied with or even being taken as sincere, is not essential to its being a
statement or a request. Accordingly, we need to distinguish the success of a speech act as an
illocutionary act and as a perlocutionary act. As a perlocutionary act, a statement or an apology
is successful if the audience accepts it, but illocutionary success does not require that. It
requires only what is necessary for the statement or the apology to be made. As Strawson
explains, the effect relevant to communicative success is understanding or what Austin called
uptake, rather than a further (perlocutionary) effect, such as belief, desire, or even action on
the part of the hearer. Indeed, an utterance can succeed as an act of communication even if
the speaker doesn’t possess the attitude he is expressing, and even if the hearer doesn’t take
him to possess it. Communication is one thing, sincerity another. Sincerity is actually
possessing the attitude one is expressing.

1.1.3.2 Communicative intentions

As Strawson argued, illocutionary acts other than those performed in special institutional
contexts, are performed not with an intention to conform to a convention but with a
communicative intention. But what sort of intention is that? In “Meaning” Grice (1957)
characterized the distinctively reflexive character of communicative intentions by proposing
that a speaker means something by his utterance only if he intends his utterance “to produce
some effect in an audience by means of the recognition of this intention.” To appreciate this
idea, consider the following games, which involve something like linguistic communication.
In the game of Charades, one player uses gestures and other bodily movements to help the other guess what she has in mind. Something like the reflexive intention involved in communication operates here, for part of what the first player intends the second player to take into account is the very fact that the first player intends her gestures etc. to enable him to guess what she has in mind. Nothing like this goes on in the game of 20 Questions, where the second player uses answers to yes-or-no questions to narrow down the possibilities of what the first player has in mind. Here the only cooperation required is honest answers on the part of the first player. Compare 20 Questions with the following game of tacit coordination: the first player selects and records an item in a certain specified category, such as a letter of the alphabet, a liquid, or a city; the second player has one chance to guess what it is. Each player wins if and only if the second player guesses right without any help. Now what counts as guessing right depends entirely on what the first player has in mind, and that depends entirely on what she thinks the second player, taking into account that she wants him to guess right, will think she wants him to think. The second player guesses whatever he thinks she wants him to think. Experience has shown that when players use the above categories, they almost always both pick the letter A, water, and the city in which they are located. It is not obvious what all these “correct” choices have in common: each one stands out in a certain way from other members of the same category, but not in the same way. For example, being first (among letters of the alphabet, being the most common (among liquids), and being local are quite different ways of standing out. It is still not clear, in the many years since the question was first raised, just what makes something uniquely salient in such situations. One suggestion is that it is the first item in the category that comes to mind, but this won’t always be right, since what first comes to the mind of one player may not be what first comes to the mind of the other.

Whatever the correct explanation of the meeting of the minds in successful communication, the basic insight underlying Grice’s idea of reflexive intentions is that communication is like a game of tacit coordination: the speaker intends the hearer to reason in a certain way partly on the basis of being so intended. That is, the hearer is to take into account that he is intended to figure out the speaker’s communicative intention. The meaning of the words uttered provides the input to this inference, but what they mean does not determine what the speaker means (even if he means precisely what his words means, they don’t determine that he is speaking literally). What is loosely called CONTEXT, i.e., a set of MUTUAL CONTEXTUAL BELIEFS (Bach
and Harnish 1979: 5), encompasses whatever other considerations the hearer is to take into account in ascertaining the speaker’s intention, partly on the basis that he is intended to do so.

In general, the success of an act has nothing to do with anyone’s recognizing the intention with which it is performed. You won’t succeed in standing on your head because someone recognizes your intention to do so. But an act of communication is distinctive in this respect. It is successful if the intention with which it is performed is recognized by the audience, partly on the basis that it is intended to be recognized. A communicative intention is reflexive in the sense discovered by Grice: its fulfillment consists in its recognition. The intention includes, as part of its content, that the audience recognize this very intention by taking into account the fact that they are intended to recognize it. A communicative intention is thus self-referential (or reflexive). An act of communication is successful if whoever it is directed to recognizes the intention with which it is performed.

When Grice characterized meaning something as intending one’s utterance “to produce some effect in an audience by means of the recognition of this intention,” he wasn’t very specify about the kind of effect to be produced. But since meaning something (in Grice’s sense) is communicating, the relevant effect is, as both Strawson (1964) and Searle (1969) recognized, understanding on the part of the audience. Moreover, an act of communication, as an essentially overt act, just IS the act of expressing an attitude, which the speaker may or may not actually possess. Since the condition on its success is that one’s audience infer the attitude from the utterance, it is clear why the intention to be performing such an act should have the reflexive character pinpointed by Grice. Considered as an act of communication rather than anything more, it is an attempt simply to get one’s audience to recognize, partly on the basis of being so intended, that a certain attitude is being expressed. One is as it were putting a certain attitude on the table. The success of any further act has as its prerequisite that the audience recognize this attitude. Communication aims at a meeting of the minds not in the sense that the audience is to think what the speaker thinks but only in the sense that a certain attitude toward a certain proposition is to be recognized as being put forward for consideration. What happens beyond that is more than communication.¹⁷
1.1.3.3 Intention, inference, and relevance

Communication succeeds if the hearer identifies the speaker’s communicative intention in the way intended. Since what the speaker says, the content of his locutionary act, does not determine the force or content of the illocutionary act(s) the speaker is performing, i.e., what the speaker is trying to communicate, figuring that out requires inference on the part of his audience. Now to describe the general character of communication is not to explain how it succeeds in particular cases. As Sperber and Wilson (1986: 20, 69-70) have rightly pointed out, Grice and his followers have not supplied much in the way of psychological detail about how the process of understanding utterances works (or, I would add, about the process of producing utterances). Providing such detail would require a general theory of real-world reasoning and a theory of salience in particular. Research in the psychology of reasoning has identified many sorts of limitations in and constraints on human reasoning and AI models of well-demarcated tasks have been developed, but a general predictive and explanatory theory is not even on the horizon. And, according to game theorists I have consulted, although the notion of salience, ever since its introduction by Schelling (1960), has continued to be relied upon in theorizing, there is still no theory of salience, no general account of what it is in virtue of which certain items in the perceptual, cognitive, or conversational environment are salient, much less mutually salient. And yet our ability to communicate, to express propositional attitudes, as well as our correlative ability to recognize the communicative intentions of others, exploits such information.

Grice made progress in explaining what this ability involves, as in his account of conversational implicature (see Horn, this volume), such as when a says of an expensive dinner, “It was edible,” and implicates that it was mediocre at best. Grice proposed a Cooperative Principle and several maxims which he named, in homage to Kant, Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner (Kant’s Modality). His account of implicature explains how ostensible violations of them can still lead to communicative success. Although Grice presents them as guidelines for how to communicate successfully, I think they are better construed as presumptions made in the course of the strategic inference involved in communication (they should not be construed, as they often are, as sociological generalizations). Because of their potential clashes, they should not be viewed as comprising a decision procedure. They provide different dimensions of considerations that the speaker may reasonably to be taken as
intending the hearer to take into account on in figuring the speaker’s communicative intention. A speaker can say one thing and manage to mean something else, as with “Nature abhors a vacuum,” or something more, as with “Is there a doctor in the house?”, by exploiting the fact that he may be presumed to be cooperative, in particular, to be speaking truthfully, informatively, relevantly, and otherwise appropriately. The listener relies on this presumption to make a contextually driven inference from what the speaker says to what he means. If taking the utterance at face value is incompatible with this presumption, one may suppose that he intends one to figure out what he does mean by searching for an explanation of why he said what he said.

These maxims or presumptions do not concern what should be conveyed at a given stage of a conversation. When someone says something to you, you do not consider what, among everything possible, is the most relevant and informative thing he could have said consistent with what he has strong evidence for. Nor should you. Unless information of a very specific sort is required, say in answer to a wh-question, there will always be many things any one of which a speaker could have tried to convey which would have contributed more to the conversation than what he was in fact trying to convey. Rather, these maxims or presumptions frame how the hearer is to figure out what the speaker is trying to convey, GIVEN the sentence he is uttering and what he is saying in uttering it. Your job is to consider what he said and how he said it and determine what he could have been trying to convey given that. Why did he say believe rather than know, is rather than seems, soon rather than in an hour, warm rather than hot, has the ability to rather than can?

Sperber and Wilson (1986) offer RELEVANCE THEORY as an alternative to Grice’s inferential account (see Wilson’s and Carston’s chapters in this volume). They eschew such allegedly problematic notions as reflexive intention, mutual belief, and maxims of conversation. They suggest that the PRINCIPLE OF RELEVANCE and THE PRESUMPTION OF OPTIMAL RELEVANCE can pick up the slack, where “relevance” is a matter of maximizing contextual effects and minimizing processing effort. Interestingly, however, when they take up specific examples in detail, they rely considerations about what the speaker might reasonably be expected to intend. At times they slide from relevance in their technical sense, which is a property of propositions relative to contexts, to relevance in the ordinary sense. Such considerations and relevance in the ordinary sense are central to the Gricean picture of the
hearer’s inference. And the inference to the speaker’s communicative intention essentially involves supposition that this intention is to be recognized. That’s what makes relevance relevant.

On the other hand, Sperber and Wilson are right to complain that reconstructions of hearers’ inferences, however much they ring true, will inevitably appear ad hoc in the absence of an explanation of how it is that certain information emerges as mutually salient (or, in Schelling’s phrase, “obviously obvious”) so that it might be exploited by the hearer. For that very reason, to suggest that processing takes place only if it is worth the effort and is a matter of settling on the first hypothesis that satisfies the principle of relevance (Sperber and Wilson, 1986: 201) does not say much about this hypothesis is arrived at. Equally, to say that inference is to an unopposed plausible explanation of the speaker’s communicative intention (Bach and Harnish, 1979: 92) is not to say how THAT is arrived at. They speak of optimizing and we speak of default reasoning, but to speak of either is not to say with any specificity how these processes work. Nor is it to explain how or why certain thoughts, such as hypotheses about speakers’ intentions, come to mind when they do. No one is prepared to explain that.

1.1.4 Saying

There are important issues pertaining to the act of saying, the locutionary level of speech act, and the correlative notion of what is said. These include the need for the notion of locutionary act, the question of how much is included in what is said, and the category of conventional implicature, which complicates Grice’s account of saying.

1.1.4.1 What is said and what isn’t

The notion of saying is needed for describing three kinds of cases: where the speaker means what he says and something else as well (implicature and indirect speech acts generally), where the speaker says one thing and means something else instead (nonliteral utterances), and where the speaker says something and doesn’t mean anything. As Austin defines it, an act of saying, a LOCUTIONARY act, is the act of using words, “as belonging to a certain vocabulary…and as conforming to a certain grammar,…with a certain more or less definite sense and reference” (1962: 92-93). And what is said, according to Grice, is “closely related to the conventional meaning of the…sentence…uttered” and must correspond to “the elements of [the sentence], their order, and their syntactic character” (1989: 87). Although what is said is limited by this
SYNTACTIC CORRELATION CONSTRAINT, because of ambiguity and indexicality it is not identical to what the sentence means. If the sentence is ambiguous, usually only one of its conventional (linguistic) meanings is operative in a given utterance (double entendre is a special case). And linguistic meaning does not determine what, on a given occasion, indexicals like she, this, and now are used to refer to (see Levinson, this volume). If someone utters “She wants this book,” he is saying that a certain woman wants a certain book, even though the words do not specify which woman and which book. So, along with linguistic information, the speaker’s semantic (disambiguating and referential) intentions are needed to determine what is said.

Grice gives the impression that the distinction between what is said and what is implicated is exhaustive. However, it seems that irony, metaphor, and other kinds of nonliteral utterances are not cases of implicature, since they are cases of saying one thing and meaning something else, rather than meaning one thing and meaning something else as well. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, Grice neglected the phenomenon of impliciture (what Sperber and Wilson call explicature). How does what is said fit in with that?

In impliciture the speaker means something that goes beyond sentence meaning (ambiguity and indexicality aside) without implicating anything or using any expressions figuratively. For example, if your child comes crying to you with a minor injury and you say to him assuringly, “You’re not going to die,” you don’t mean that he will never die but merely that he won’t die from that injury. And if someone wants you to join them for dinner and you say with regret, “I’ve already eaten,” you mean that you have eaten dinner that evening, not just at some time previously. In both cases you do not mean precisely what you are saying but something more specific.23

Now several of Grice’s critics have pointed out that implicitures (this is my term, not theirs) are not related closely enough to conventional meaning to fall under Grice’s notion of what is said but that they are too closely related to count as implicatures. Recanati (1989) suggests that the notion of what is said should be extended to cover such cases, but clearly he is going beyond Grice’s understanding of what is said as corresponding to the constituents of the sentence and their syntactic arrangement. The syntactic correlation constraint entails that if any element of what the speaker intends to convey does not correspond to any element of the sentence he is uttering, it is not part of what he is SAYING. Of course it may correspond to what he is asserting, but I am not using say to mean ‘assert’. In the jargon of speech act theory,
saying is locutionary, not illocutionary. Others speak of implicitures as the “explicit” content of an utterance. Sperber and Wilson’s neologism “explicature” (1986, p. 182) for this in-between category is rather misleading in this respect. It is a cognate of *explicate*, not *explicit*, and making something explicit that isn’t (explicating) isn’t the same thing as making it explicit in the first place. That’s why I prefer the neologism “impliciture,” since in these cases part of what is meant is communicated only implicitly.24

1.1.4.2 Conventional implicature

Grice is usually credited with the discovery of conventional implicature, but it was actually Frege’s (1892) idea — Grice (1975) merely labeled it. They both claimed that the conventional meanings of certain terms, such as *but* and *still*, make contributions to the total import of a sentence without bearing on its truth or falsity. In “She is poor but she is honest,” for example, the contrast between being poor and being honest due to the presence of *but* is, according to Grice (1961: 127), “implied as distinct from being stated.” Frege and Grice merely appeal to intuition in suggesting that the conventional contributions of such terms do not affect what is said in utterances of sentences in which they occur. Grice observes that conventional implicatures are detachable but not cancelable, but this cannot serve as a test for their presence. It does distinguish them from conversational implicatures, which are cancelable but not detachable (except for those induced by exploiting the maxim of manner, which depend on how one puts what one says), and from entailments, which are neither cancelable nor detachable. However, detachability is not an independent test. If a supposed implicature really were part of what is said, one could not leave it out and still say the same thing. To use *and* rather than *but*, for example, would be to say less.

I have argued previously (Bach 1999b) that the category of conventional implicature needlessly complicates Grice’s distinction between what is said and what is implicated and that apparent cases of conventional implicature are really instances of something else. If we abandon the common assumption that indicative sentences express at most one proposition, we can see that expressions like *but* and *still* do contribute to what is said, provided that can include more than one proposition. In the above example, the additional proposition concerns the contrast between poverty and honesty. The insistence that this proposition is merely
implicated stems from the fact that the intuition that the utterance can be true even if this proposition is false is sensitive only to the main proposition being expressed.

Grice also suggested that conventional implicature is involved in the performance of “noncentral” speech acts (1989, p. 122). He had in mind the use of such expressions as these: *after all, anyway, at any rate, besides, be that as it may, by the way, first of all, finally, frankly, furthermore, however, if you want my opinion, in conclusion, indeed, in other words, moreover, now that you mention it, on the other hand, otherwise, speaking for myself, strictly speaking, to begin with, to digress, to oversimplify, to put it mildly.*

These are often used to comment on the very utterance in which they occur — its force, point, character, or the role in the discourse. However, it seems to me that it is not accurate to call these second-order speech acts *implicatures.* In uttering, “Frankly, the dean is a moron,” for example, you are not *implying* that you are speaking frankly, you are *saying* something about (providing a gloss or commentary on) your utterance. As a result, the contribution of an utterance modifier does not readily figure in an indirect report of what someone said, e.g., “He said that (*frankly) the dean is a moron.” Utterance modifiers are in construction syntactically but not semantically with the clauses they introduce.

**1.2 The semantic-pragmatic distinction**

Historically, the semantic-pragmatic distinction has been formulated in various ways. These formulations have fallen into three main types, depending on which other distinction the semantic-pragmatic distinction was thought most to correspond to:

- linguistic (conventional) meaning vs. use
- truth-conditional vs. non-truth-conditional meaning
- context independence vs. context dependence

In my view, none of these distinctions quite corresponds to the semantic-pragmatic distinction. The trouble with the first is that there are expressions whose literal meanings are related to use, such as the utterance modifiers mentioned above. It seems that the only way to specify their semantic contribution (when they occur initially or are otherwise set off) is to specify how they are to be used. The second distinction is inadequate because some expressions have meanings that do not contribute to truth-conditional contents. Paradigmatic are expressions like ‘Alas!’ , ‘Good-bye’, and ‘Wow!’ , but utterance modifiers also illustrate this, as do such linguistic
devices as *it*-clefts and *wh*-clefts, which pertain to information structure, not information content. The third distinction neglects the fact that some expressions, notably indexicals, are context-sensitive.

Also, there are two common but fundamentally different conceptions of semantics. One takes semantics to be concerned with the linguistic meanings of expressions (words, phrases, sentences). On this conception, sentence semantics is a component of grammar. It assigns meanings to sentences as a function of the meanings of their semantically simple constituents, as supplied by their lexical semantics, and their constituent structure, as provided by their syntax. The other conception takes semantics to be concerned with the truth-conditional contents of sentences (or, alternatively, of utterances of sentences) and with the contributions expressions make to the truth-conditional contents of sentences in which they occur. The intuitive idea underlying this conception is that the meaning of a sentence, the information it carries, imposes a condition on what the world must be like in order for the sentence to be true.

Now the linguistic and the truth-conditional conceptions of semantics would come to the same thing if, in general, the linguistic meanings of sentences determined their truth conditions, and they all had truth conditions. Many sentences, though, are imperative or interrogative rather than declarative. These do not have truth conditions but compliance or answerhood conditions instead. Even if only declarative sentences are considered, in a great many cases the linguistic meaning of a sentence does not uniquely determine a truth condition. One reason for this is ambiguity, lexical or structural. The sentence may contain one or more ambiguous words, or it may be structurally ambiguous. Or the sentence may contain indexical elements. Ambiguity makes it necessary to relativize the truth condition of a declarative sentence to one of its senses, and indexicality requires relativization to a context. Moreover, some sentences, such as *Jack was ready* and *Jill had enough*, though syntactically well-formed, are semantically incomplete. That is, the meaning of such a sentence does not fully determine a truth condition, even after ambiguities are resolved and references are fixed (Bach 1994, Sperber & Wilson 1986). Syntactic completeness does not guarantee semantic completeness.

1.2.1 Other pertinent distinctions

It is a platitude that what a sentence means generally doesn’t determine what a speaker means in uttering it. The gap between linguistic meaning and speaker meaning is said to be filled by
“context”: what the speaker means somehow “depends on context,” or at least “context makes it clear” what the speaker means. But there are two quite different sorts of context, and they play quite different roles. What might be called WIDE CONTEXT concerns any contextual information that is relevant to determining, in the sense of ascertaining, the speaker’s intention. NARROW CONTEXT concerns information specifically relevant to determining, in the sense of providing, the semantic values of context-sensitive expressions (and morphemes of tense and aspect). Wide context does not literally determine anything.\textsuperscript{27} It is the body of mutually evident information that speaker and hearer exploit, the speaker to make his communicative intention evident and the hearer, taking himself to be intended to, to identify that intention.

There are also distinctions to be drawn with respect to the terms UTTERANCE and INTERPRETATION. An utterance can be the act of uttering a sentence or the sentence uttered. Strictly speaking, it is the sentence that is uttered (the type, not the token) that has semantic properties. The act of uttering the sentence has pragmatic properties. The notion of the content of an utterance of a sentence has no independent theoretical significance. There is just the content of the sentence the speaker is uttering, which, being semantic, is independent of the speaker’s communicative intention, and the content of the speaker’s communicative intention. As for the term “interpretation,” it can mean either the formal, compositional determination by the grammar of a language of the meaning of a sentence or the psychological process whereby a person understands a sentence or an utterance of a sentence. Using the phrase “utterance interpretation” indiscriminately, as often happens, can only confound the issues. For example, talking about the interpretation of an utterance in a context rather than of a sentence with respect to a context leads to paradox. An oral utterance of I am not speaking or a waking utterance of I am asleep cannot fail to be false, and yet the sentences themselves are not necessarily false. Relative to me, the first is true whenever I am not speaking, and the second is true whenever I am asleep.

If a grammar maps form on to meaning, presumably the semantics of a sentence is a projection of its syntax. That is, its semantic content is interpreted syntactic structure, determined compositionally as a function of the contents of the sentence’s constituents and their syntactic relations. This leaves open the possibility that some sentences do not express complete propositions and that some sentences are typically used to convey something more
specific than what is predictable from their compositionally determined contents. Also, insofar as sentences are tensed and contain indexicals, their semantic contents are relative to contexts (in the narrow sense).

In sum, we should keep in mind the following distinctions, all of which are relevant to the semantic-pragmatic distinction to be drawn below:

- between a sentence and an utterance of a sentence
- between what a sentence means and what it is used to communicate
- between what a sentence expresses relative to a context and what a speaker expresses (communicates) by uttering the sentence in a context
- between the grammatical determination of what a sentence means and the hearer’s inferential determination of what a speaker means (in uttering the sentence)

1.2.2 Drawing the semantic-pragmatic distinction

A semantic-pragmatic distinction can be drawn with respect to various things, such as ambiguities, implications, presuppositions, interpretations, knowledge, processes, rules, and principles. I take it to apply fundamentally to types of information. Semantic information is information encoded in what is uttered — these are stable linguistic features of the sentence — together with any extralinguistic information that provides (semantic) values to context-sensitive expressions in what is uttered. Pragmatic information is (extralinguistic) information that arises from an actual act of utterance, and is relevant to the hearer’s determination of what the speaker is communicating. Whereas semantic information is encoded in what is uttered, pragmatic information is generated by, or at least made relevant by, the act of uttering it. This way of characterizing pragmatic information generalizes Grice’s point that what a speaker implicates in saying what he says is carried not by what he says but by his saying it and perhaps by his saying it in a certain way (1989: 39).

It could easily be maintained that disputes about the semantic-pragmatic distinction are merely terminological. The main thing is to choose coherent terminology and to apply it consistently. So, for example, clearly there are, as illustrated above, aspects of linguistic meaning (semantics) that pertain to use. Does this threaten our conception of the semantic-pragmatic distinction? Not at all. These aspects of linguistic meaning, like any others, are encoded by linguistic expressions — they just don’t contribute to the truth-conditional contents.
of sentences in which they occur. But the fact that they pertain to use does not make them pragmatic. As aspects of linguistic meaning, they belong to expressions independently of whether those expressions are used. Of course, when such an expression is used, it presence contributes to what the speaker is doing in uttering the sentence containing it.

1.2.3 Some consequences of the semantic-pragmatic distinction

Our formulation has certain interesting theoretical implications, which can only be sketched here. For one thing, it helps explain why what Grice called GENERALIZED conversational implicature is a pragmatic phenomenon, even though it involves linguistic regularities of sorts. They are cancelable, hence not part of what is said, and otherwise have all the features of PARTICULARIZED implicatures, except that they are characteristically associated with certain forms of words. That is, special features of the context of utterance are not needed to generate them and make them identifiable. As a result, they do not have to be worked out step by step in the way that particularized implicatures have to be. Nevertheless, they can be worked out. A listener unfamiliar with the pattern of use could still figure out what the speaker meant. This makes them standardized but not conventionalized.30

Also, the semantic-pragmatic distinction as understood here undermines any theoretical role for the notion of presupposition, whether construed as semantic or pragmatic (see Atlas, this volume). A SEMANTIC PRESUPPOSITION is a precondition for truth or falsity. But, as argued long ago by Stalnaker (1974) and by Boër and Lycan (1975), there is no such thing: it is either entailment or pragmatic. And so-called PRAGMATIC PRESUPPOSITIONS come to nothing more than preconditions for performing a speech act successfully and felicitously and mutual contextual beliefs taken into account by speakers in forming communicative intentions and by hearers in recognizing them. In some cases they may seem to be conventionally tied to particular expressions or constructions, e.g., to definite descriptions or to clefts, but they are not really. Rather, given the semantic function of a certain expression or construction, there are certain constraints on its reasonable or appropriate use. As Stalnaker puts it, a “pragmatic account makes it possible to explain some particular facts about presuppositions in terms of general maxims of rational communication rather than in terms of complicated and ad hoc hypotheses about the semantics of particular words and particular kinds of constructions” (1974/1999: 48).
Finally, our formulation of the semantic-pragmatic distinction throws a monkey wrench into the conception of the semantic content of a sentence as its CONTEXT-CHANGE POTENTIAL. This conception, adopted by many formal semanticists (e.g. Heim 1983), treats semantic content dynamically, as the ability of a sentence, when uttered, to alter the context in which it is uttered (or, where what Lewis (1979) calls “accommodation” is required, to change the context retroactively). In my view, however, this conception conflates semantic content with pragmatic effect. It is in virtue of the fact not of what the speaker says but that he says it that the (wide) context is changed in a certain way. Context change is the resultant of what is said and saying it in the context.

These examples illustrate not only the importance of the semantic-pragmatic distinction but the import of Grice’s pragmatic strategy of trying to explain linguistic phenomena in as general a way as possible, of appealing to independently motivated principles and processes of rational communication rather than to special features of particular expressions and constructions.

2. Applied Pragmatics

In this part we will survey an assortment of philosophically important expressions and problems whose treated is aided by pragmatic considerations. Needless to say, the issues here are more complex and contentious than our discussion can indicate. But at least these examples will illustrate how to implement what Stalnaker has aptly described as “the classic Gricean strategy: to try to use simple truisms about conversation or discourse to explain regularities that seem complex and unmotivated when they are assumed to be facts about the semantics of the relevant expressions” (1999, p. 8).

2.1 The speech act and assertion fallacies

The distinction between what an expression means and how it is used had a direct impact on many of claims made by so-called ordinary-language philosophers. In ethics, for example, it was (and sometimes still is) supposed that sentences containing words like ‘good’ and ‘right’ are used to express affective attitudes, such as approval or disapproval, hence that such sentences are not used to make statements and that questions of value and morals are not matters of fact. This line of argument is fallacious. As Moore points out, although one expresses approval (or disapproval) by making a value judgment, it is the act of making the
judgment, not the content of the judgment, that implies that one approves (1942: 540-45). Sentences used for ethical evaluation, such as “Loyalty is good” and “Cruelty is wrong,” are no different in form from other indicative sentences, which, whatever the status of their contents, are standardly used to make statements. This leaves open the possibility that there is something fundamentally problematic about their contents. Perhaps such statements are factually defective and, despite syntactic appearances, are neither true nor false. However, this is a metaphysical issue about the status of the properties to which ethical predicates purport to refer. It is not the business of the philosophy of language to determine whether or not goodness or wrongness are real properties (or whether or not the goodness of loyalty and the wrongness of cruelty are matters of fact).

The line of argument sketched above commits what Searle calls the SPEECH ACT FALLACY (1969: 136-141). He gives further examples, each involving a speech act analysis of a philosophically important word. Not only do these analyses claim that true is used to endorse or concede statements (Strawson), know to give guarantees (Austin), and probably to qualify commitments (Toulmin), they claim that those uses constitute the meaning of these words. In each case the fallacy is the same: identifying what the word is typically used to do with its semantic content.

Searle also exposes the ASSERTION FALLACY (1969: 141-46), whereby conditions of making an assertion are confused with what is asserted. For example, it was fallaciously argued, on the grounds that because one would not assert that one believes something if one was prepared to assert that one knows it, that knowing does not entail believing. Similarly, it was argued that when one does something that involves no effort or difficulty, one does not try to do it. Grice (1961) identified the same fallacy in a parallel argument, due to Austin, about words like seems, appears, and looks. One might argue that since you would not say that a table looks old unless you (or your audience) doubted or were even prepared to deny that the chair was old, the statement that the table looks old entails that its being old is doubted or denied. This argument is clearly fallacious, since it draws a conclusion about entailment from a premise about conditions on appropriate assertion. Similarly, you wouldn’t SAY that someone tried to stand up if doing it involved no effort or difficulty, but this doesn’t show that trying to do something entails that there was effort or difficulty in doing it. You can misleadingly imply something without its being entailed by what you say.
2.2 Logical expressions

In “Logic and Conversation,” undoubtedly the philosophy article with the greatest impact on pragmatics, Grice (1975) introduces his theory of conversational implicature by considering whether the semantics of logically important expressions, such as certain sentential connectives and quantificational phrases, are captured by the logical behavior of their formal counterparts. For example, are the terms and, or, and if adequately represented by “&” (or “∧”), “∨,” “⊃” (or “→”)? Applying Grice’s theory to these terms suggests that apparent difficulties with their usual logical renderings can be explained away pragmatically.

2.2.1 and

Pragmatic considerations exploit the fact that in ordinary speech not just what a sentence means but the fact that someone utters it plays a role in determining what its utterance conveys. For example, there is a difference between what is likely to be conveyed by utterances of (1) and (2), and the difference is due to the order of the conjuncts.

(1) Henry had sex and got infected.
(2) Henry got infected and had sex.

Yet and is standardly symbolized by the conjunction “&,” and in logic the order of conjuncts doesn’t matter. However, it seems that (1) and (2) have the same semantic content and that it is not the meaning of and but the fact that the speaker utters the conjuncts in one order rather than the other that explains the difference in how each utterance is likely to be taken. But then any suggestion of temporal order, or even causal connection, is not a part of the literal content of the sentence but is merely implicit in its utterance (Levinson 2000: 122-27). One piece of evidence for this is that such a suggestion may be explicitly canceled (Grice 1989: 39). One could utter (1) or (2) and continue, “but not in that order” without contradicting what one has just said. One would be merely canceling any suggestion, due to the order of presentation, that the two events occurred in that order.

However, it has been argued that passing Grice’s cancelability test does not suffice to show the differences between the two sentences above is not a matter of linguistic meaning. Cohen (1971) and Carston (1988) have appealed to the fact that the difference is preserved when the conjunctions are embedded in the antecedent of a conditional, as here (my example, not theirs):
(3) a. If Henry had sex and got infected, he needs a doctor.
   b. If Henry got infected and had sex, he needs a lawyer.

Also, the difference is apparent when the two conjunctions are combined:

(4) It’s worse to get infected and have sex than to have sex and get infected.

However, these examples do not show that the relevant differences are a matter of linguistic meaning. A simpler hypothesis, one that does not ascribe temporal or and causal meanings to and, is that these examples, like the simpler (1) and (2), involve conversational implicature, in which what the speaker means is an implicitly qualified version of what he says. Likely utterances of (1) and (2) are made as if they included an implicit then after and, and are likely to be taken accordingly (with (1) there is also likely to be an implicit ‘as a result’). The speaker is exploiting Grice’s maxim of manner in describing events in their order of occurrence, and the hearer relies on the order of presentation to infer the speaker’s intention in that regard. On the pragmatic approach, and is treated as unambiguously truth-functional, without having additional temporal or causal senses.

2.2.2 or

Even though it is often supposed that in English there is both an inclusive or and an exclusive or, in the propositional calculus or is symbolized with just the inclusive “∨”. A disjunction is true just in case at least one of its disjuncts is true. Of course, if there were an exclusive or in English, it would also be truth-functional — an exclusive disjunction is true just in case exactly one of its disjuncts is true — but the simpler hypothesis is that the English or is unambiguously inclusive, like “∨”. But does this comport with examples like these?

(5) Max is in Miami or he’s in Palm Beach.
(6) Max is in Miami or Minnie (his wife) will hire a lawyer.

An utterance of (5) is likely to be taken as exclusive. However, this is not a consequence of the presence of an exclusive or but of the fact that one can’t be in two places at once. Also, it might seem that there is an epistemic aspect to or, for in uttering (5), the speaker is implying that he doesn’t know whether Max is in Miami or in Palm Beach. Surely, though, this implication is not due to the meaning of the word or but rather to the presumption that the speaker is supplying as much relevant and reliable information as he has. The speaker
wouldn’t be contradicting himself if, preferring not to reveal Max’s exact whereabouts, he added, “I know where he is, but I can’t tell you.”

The case of (6) requires a different story. Here the order of the disjuncts matters, since an utterance of “Minnie will hire a lawyer or Max is in Miami” would not be taken in the way that (6) is likely to be. Because the disjuncts in (6) are ostensibly unrelated, its utterance would be hard to explain unless they are actually connected somehow. In a suitable context, an utterance of (6) would likely be taken as if it contained else after or, i.e., as a conditional of sorts. That is, the speaker means that if Max is NOT in Miami, Minnie will hire a lawyer, and might be implicating further that the reason Minnie will hire a lawyer is that she suspects Max is really seeing his girlfriend in Palm Beach. The reason that order matters in this case is not that or does not mean inclusive disjunction but that in (6) it is intended as elliptical for or else, which is not symmetrical.

2.2.3 if

Rendering if as the material conditional “⊃” is notoriously problematic, even if so-called counterfactual conditionals are not taken into account. Nothing is more puzzling to beginning logic students than that on the rendering of if $S_1$, then $S_2$ as “$p \supset q$”, a conditional is true just in case its antecedent is false or its consequent is true. This means that if the antecedent is false, it doesn’t matter whether the consequent is true or false, and if the consequent is true, it doesn’t matter whether the antecedent is true or false. Thus, both (7) and (8) count as true,

(7) If Madonna is a virgin, she has no children.
(8) If Madonna is a virgin, she has children.

and so do both (9) and (10),

(9) If Madonna is married, she has children.
(10) If Madonna is not married, she has children.

The apparent problem with the material conditional analysis of if sentences is that it imposes no constraint on the relationship between the propositions expressed by the antecedent and the consequent. On this analysis (11) - (14) are as true as (7) - (10),

(11) If Madonna is a virgin, she is a multi-millionaire.
(12) If Madonna is a virgin, she is not a multi-millionaire.
(13) If Madonna is married, she is brash.
(14) If Madonna is not married, she is brash.
This might suggest that if sentences are not truth-functional; indeed, Edgington (1991) has argued that they are not even truth-valued.

However, it is arguable that the connection (what Strawson (1986) calls a “ground-consequent relation”) between antecedent and consequent is not part of the conventional meaning of an if sentence and that the implication of such a connection can be explained pragmatically. So suppose that an if sentence is equivalent to a material conditional, “p \supset q,” true just in case either its antecedent is false or its consequent is true. It is thus equivalent to “\neg p \lor q.” Now as Strawson sketches the story, one wouldn’t utter a conditional if one could categorically assert the consequent or the negation of the antecedent. That would violate the presumption that a speaker makes as strong a relevantly informative statement as he has a basis for making. As we saw above, it would be misleading to assert a disjunction if you are in a position to assert a disjunct, unless you have independent reason for withholding it. In the present case, you wouldn’t assert the equivalent of “\neg p \lor q” if you could either assert “\neg p” or assert “q.” But then why assert the equivalent of “\neg p \lor q”? The only evident reason for this is that you’re in a position to deny “(p \& \neg q)” — “(\neg(p \& \neg q)” is equivalent to “\neg p \lor q” — on grounds that are independent of reasons for either asserting “\neg p” or asserting “q.” And such grounds would involve a ground-consequent relation. So, for example, you wouldn’t utter (7) if you could assert that Madonna is not a virgin or that she has no children. However, in the case of (15),

(15) If Madonna has any more children, she will retire by 2005.
where you’re not in a position to deny the antecedent or categorically assert the consequent, you would assert it to indicate a ground-consequent relation between them.

Although Strawson’s account is plausible so far as it goes, sometimes we have occasion to assert a conditional without implicating any ground-consequent relation between its antecedent and consequent. Indeed, we may implicate the absence of such a relation. This happens, for example, when one conditional is asserted and then another is asserted with a contrary antecedent and the same consequent, as in the following dialogue:

Guest: The TV isn’t working.
Host: If the TV isn’t plugged in, it doesn’t work.
Guest: The TV IS plugged in.
Host: If the TV is plugged in, it doesn’t work. Clearly the host’s second utterance doesn’t implicate any ground-consequent relation. As the propositional calculus predicts, the host’s two statements together entail that the TV doesn’t work, period.

A further bit of support for the truth-functional account of conditionals comes from cases like If you can lift that, I’m a monkey’s uncle or (16),

(16) If Saddam Hussein wins the Albert Schweitzer Humanitarian Award, Dr. Dre will win the Nobel Prize for medicine.

In such cases, the consequent is obviously false, and the speaker is exploiting this fact. There is no entailment of a ground-consequent connection between the antecedent and consequent, and the speaker is not implicating any. Rather, he is implicating that the antecedent is false, indeed preposterous.

One last point about conditionals is that sometimes they are used as if they were biconditionals (symbolized by “≡” rather than “⊃”). For example, it might be argued that if can sometimes mean ‘if and only if,’ as in (17),

(17) If Harry works hard, he’ll get promoted.

where there seems to be an implication that if Harry doesn’t work hard, he won’t get promoted, i.e., that he’ll get promoted only if he works hard. The implication is pragmatic: the speaker wouldn’t utter (17) if he thought that working hard had nothing to do with getting promoted.32

2.2.4 Quantificational phrases

There are discrepancies between ordinary uses of quantificational phrases and how they are represented in logic. For example, although “(∃x)(Fx & Gx)” is logically compatible with “(∀x)(Fx ⊃ Gx)”, ordinarily when you say, e.g., “Some politicians are honest,” you imply that not all politicians are honest. But clearly this is a (generalized) conversational implicature: you would not say what you said if you were in a position to assert that ALL politicians are honest. Also, in standard logical systems “(∀x)(Fx ⊃ Gx)” does not entail “(∃x)(Fx)”. Nevertheless, if you were to say, e.g., “All of Venus’s moons are small,” you would imply that Venus has moons. But again, this discrepancy between ordinary use and logical representation can be explained away pragmatically: normally you wouldn’t say what you said if you didn’t believe that Venus had moons.
Another issue concerns the domain of quantificational phrases. If you said to a group you invited to a pot luck dinner, “everyone should bring something,” you would mean that everyone who comes to the dinner should bring something to eat. Similarly, when Yogi Berra said, “nobody goes there [to a certain restaurant] any more—it’s too crowded,” he meant that nobody important goes there any more. It is sometimes supposed that these restrictions on the “universe of discourse” or “domain of quantification” are provided contextually as values of covert quantifier domain variables. However, it’s not necessary to transpose these technical notions from logic to natural language. Instead we may suppose instead that these examples are but special cases of impliciture. A speaker who uses a quantified noun phrase with a certain intended restriction could have made that restriction explicit by modifying with it with an adjective, prepositional phrase, or relative clause.

2.3 Referring terms and quantificational phrases

Philosophers commonly distinguish referring terms from quantificational phrases. They generally, though not universally, regard proper names, indexicals, and demonstratives (see Levinson, this volume) as referring terms and definite and indefinite descriptions as quantificational phrases (Neale 1993). The relevant difference between the two types of noun phrase consists in whether they contribute objects or quantificational structure to the contents of sentences in which they occur. As Russell puts it, a referring term serves “merely to indicate what we are speaking about; [it] is no part of the fact asserted…: it is merely part of the symbolism by which we express our thought” (1919: 175). Sentences containing quantificational phrases express general propositions, and particular objects do not enter into their contents. So, according to Russell’s (1905) famous theory of descriptions, a subject-predicate sentence of the form “The F is G” does not express a singular proposition of the form “a is G” but a general, existential proposition of the form (in modern notation) “(∃x)((∀y)(Fy ≡ y=x) & Gx), in which the object that is the F does not appear. So, for example, “The queen of England loves roses” does not express a proposition about Elizabeth II. It means what it means whether or not she is queen of England and, indeed, whether or not England has a queen. As a quantificational phrase, “the queen of England” does not refer to Elizabeth II (Russell would say it “denotes” her, but for him denotation was a semantically inert relation). It can, of course, be USED to refer to her. This might suggest that definite descriptions phrases are semantically ambiguous, a possibility
Donnellan (1966) raised with his well-known distinction between referential and attributive uses, and posed as a threat to Russell’s theory of descriptions (see Abbott, this volume). However, as Kripke (1977) forcefully argued, with support from Bach (1987b, ch. 5), Neale (1990), and Salmon (1991), referential uses of definite descriptions can be understood in pragmatic terms. And Ludlow and Neale (1991) have given a similarly pragmatic account of referential uses of indefinite descriptions.

Although quantificational phrases are not referring terms, some can be used to refer. Even so, because of their distinct logical and semantic role, they should not be assimilated to referring terms. Consider, for example, the well-known problem discussed by linguists in terms of the correlation between the givenness hierarchy of referring expressions, ranging from indexical pronouns (and zero pronouns, in some languages) to indefinite descriptions, and the accessibility hierarchy of objects of reference, ranging from things immediately present and prominent to items far removed, both in space and relevance, from the context of discourse. However, the expressions on the givenness hierarchy are not of the same semantic type. Some are referring terms and some are quantificational phrases. So, for example, indefinites should not be treated as if they belong on the same scale as pronouns. The problem is that whereas a pronoun like she is a paradigmatic referring expression, an indefinite, like a woman, is anything but. If Jack says, “A woman wants to marry me,” he is not referring to any woman — even if he has a particular woman in mind. For there is no woman that the listener must identify in order to understand the utterance (this is so even if the fact that the speaker has some unspecified woman in mind is recognized by the hearer, say because the speaker uses the specific indefinite form “a certain woman”). To see this point, one must distinguish the content of the utterance from the fact that would make it true. So, for example, even if Jill wants to marry Jack, he is not saying that Jill wants to marry him, although that fact about her is what makes his utterance true — it would be true even if she wanted to marry someone else. Also, suppose that after saying “A woman wants to marry me,” Jack adds, “But she doesn’t love me.” Even though Jack is using she to refer to the woman who (he believes) wants to marry him, this does not show that a woman referred to that woman. It is often said, following Karttunen (1976), that indefinites introduce discourse referents, but this is using the term ‘referent’ loosely.

Now consider a case in which an indefinite is used without any implication of uniqueness and yet is followed by a singular pronoun. Suppose someone says,
(18) Phil took a pill last night at 11p.m., and it relieved his migraine.
Assume that Phil took several pills at that time, that most were not for migraine, and that the speaker has no particular pill in mind. Even so, it seem that (18) can be true in these circumstances. However, I suggest, this is illusory: its second conjunct does not have a determinate truth condition with respect to the assumed circumstances, because the anaphoric pronoun *it* in (18) does not have a determinate reference. To see why, suppose that no pill cured Phil. Then what would the second conjunct of (18) say? It is not clear to me what it would say or, indeed, that it would say anything. Presumably, though, what it says should be the same whether it is true or false. But it is not clear, on the supposition that it is false, what it could say. There is no pill which the speaker is mistakenly saying relieved Phil’s migraine.

Then why does it seem that (18) could be true (still assuming that Phil took several pills)? The apparent truth of (18), in circumstances where it is likely to be uttered, does not depend on which pill makes it true — as long as there is some pill that relieves Phil’s migraine. We confuse what (18) says with the proposition that Phil took a pill (last night at 11pm) that cured his headache. That is not what (18) says because *a pill* does not bind *it*, which is outside its binding domain. So *it* can only be what Neale calls a D-TYPE PRONOUN, one which “goes proxy for a definite description” (1990, p. 187). In this case the description is “the pill that Phil took,” but since he took more than one pill, this description does not denote some one pill. This kind of case, with the cognitive illusion it produces, again illustrates the force of a pragmatic explanation for what might otherwise be a mysterious semantic phenomenon, in this case the imagined ability of a pronoun to refer when it can have no determinate reference.

### 2.4 Statements of identity and attitude ascriptions

Frege’s (1892) twin problems, concerning the informativeness of identity statements and the failure of substitution of coreferring terms in attitude ascriptions, are often thought to admit of pragmatic solutions. For example, even though the name *Reginald Dwight* has the same reference as *Elton John*, (19) is informative in a way in which (20) is not.

(19) Reginald Dwight = Elton John
(20) Elton John = Elton John

Yet if the semantic function of a name is just to refer to its bearer, the two names are semantically equivalent and make the same contribution to sentences in which they occur, and
(19) should contain no more information than (20). But evidently it does. Similarly, sentence (21) is could be true and (22) false, even though they appear to say the same thing.

(21) Madonna believes that Elton John is musically talented.

(22) Madonna believes that Reginald Dwight is musically talented.

If *Reginald Dwight* makes the same semantic contribution to (22) as *Elton John* makes to the otherwise identical (21), the two sentences should express the same proposition and, indeed, they would appear to have Madonna believing the same proposition.

One strategy for solving these puzzles, developed most thoroughly by Salmon (1986), is to reject the key assumption underlying them, namely that (19) is more informative than (20) and that (21) and (22), or the sentences embedded in them, express different propositions. He accepts the consequences of the view that coreferring names make the same semantic contribution to sentences in which they occur, but denies that the relevant differences between (19) and (20) and between (21) and (22) are semantic. He explains this difference pragmatically. Following Frege, he grants that different ways of thinking of Reginald Dwight/Elton John are associated with the two names and, consequently, that there are different ways of taking the one proposition that is expressed by both “Elton John is musically talented” and “Reginald Dwight is musically talented.” But these ways of thinking/taking are not part of the semantics of the names/sentences. In Salmon’s view, utterances of the sentences “pragmatically impart” information about ways of thinking of individuals and ways of taking propositions.

However, Braun (1998) has challenged Salmon’s and other pragmatic approaches. He argues that such information can be taken into account in solving Frege’s puzzles without invoking pragmatic considerations. In Bach 1997 I challenge assumptions shared by Braun and those he criticizes and develop a radically different type of pragmatic approach. This challenge is based on the intuition that (21) and (22) do not have Madonna believing the same thing.

In this section we have sampled a variety of philosophically significant types of expressions and constructions that seem give rise to ambiguities and other semantic complications. Economy and plausibility of explanation is afforded by heeding the semantic-pragmatic distinction. Rather than attribute needlessly complex properties to specific linguistic items, we proceeded on the default assumption that uses of language can be explained by means of simpler semantic hypotheses together with general facts about rational communication.
References


Notes

1 This distinction is compatible with Grice’s conviction thought that linguistic meaning can be reduced to (standardized) speaker’s meaning. However, this reductive view has not gained wide acceptance, partly because of its extreme complexity (see Grice 1969 and Schiffer 1972) and partly because it requires the controversial assumption that language is essentially a vehicle for communicating thoughts. Even so, many philosophers would grant that mental content is a more fundamental notion than linguistic meaning. This issue will not be taken up here.

2 We do this by using a performative verb like promise, pronounce, apologize, or request in a sentence beginning with I followed by a performative verb in present tense and active voice. The first-person plural is possible too (“We promise …”), as is the second-person passive (“Smoking is prohibited”). The word hereby may be inserted before the performative verb to indicate that the utterance in which it occurs is the vehicle of the performance of the act in question.

3 However, it does seem that in uttering, say, “I promise you a rose garden,” a speaker is at least saying that he is promising the hearer a rose garden. And what he is saying is true just in case he is making that promise.

4 Austin’s focus on such cases led him to develop an account of what it takes for these formalized utterances to be performed successfully and a classification of the various things that can go wrong (“flaws,” “hitches,” and other sorts of “infelicities”).

5 It has been thought, e.g., by Katz (1977), that performativity is a matter of linguistic meaning. Perhaps there is a special semantic property of performativity, so that it is part of the meaning of words like promise, apologize and request that one can perform an act of the very sort named by the verb by uttering a performative sentence containing that verb. One problem with this suggestion is that it implausibly entails that such verbs are systematically ambiguous. For a performative sentence can be used literally but nonperformatively, e.g., to report some habitual act. For instance, one might use “I apologize whenever I smirk” to describe typical situations in which one apologizes. Moreover, it seems that even if verbs like promise, apologize and request were never used performatively, they would still mean just what they mean in fact. Imagine a community of users of a language just like English in which there is no practice of using such verbs performatively. When people there perform acts of the relevant sorts, they always do so, just as we sometimes do, without using performative verbs, e.g., making promises by saying “I will definitely ....,” giving apologies by saying “I’m sorry,” and issuing requests by using imperative sentences. In this hypothetical community the verbs promise, apologize and request would seem to have the same meanings that they in fact have in English, applying, respectively, to acts of promising, apologizing and requesting. The only relevant difference
would be that such acts are not performed by means of the performative form. It seems, then, that in our community, where they are sometimes performed in this way, performativity is not a matter of meaning.

6 So it would seem that an account of explicit performatives should not appeal, as Searle’s (1989) elaborate account in “How Performatives Work” does, to any special features of the performative formula. In “How Performatives Really Work,” Bach and Harnish (1992) argue that Searle’s account is based on a spurious distinction between having a communicative intention and being committed to having one and on a confusion between performativity and communicative success.

7 Also, there are all sorts of other forms of words which are standardly used to perform speech acts of certain types without making explicit the type of act of being performed, e.g. “It would be nice if you ...” to request, “Why don’t you ...?” to advise, “Do you know ...?” to ask for information, “I’m sorry” to apologize, and “I wouldn’t do that” to warn. Even in the case of hedged and embedded performatives, such as “I can assure you ...,” “I must inform you ...,” “I would like to invite you ...,” and “I am pleased to be able to offer you ...,” in which the type of act is made explicit, the alleged conventions for simple performative forms would not apply. For discussion of hedged and embedded performatives, see Fraser (1975) and Bach and Harnish (1979: 209-19).

8 Their standardization does not show that they are governed by special conventions. Rather, it provides a precedent that serves to streamline the inference required for their successful performance.

9 We develop a detailed taxonomy in Bach and Harnish 1979: Chapter 3, where each type of illocutionary act is individuated by the type of attitude expressed. In some cases there are constraints on the content as well. We borrow the terms “constative” and “commissive” from Austin and “directive” from Searle. We adopt the term “acknowledgment” rather than Austin’s “behabitive” or Searle’s “expressive” for apologies, greetings, thanks, congratulations, condolences, etc., which express an attitude to the hearer that is occasioned by some event that is thereby being acknowledged, often in satisfaction of a social expectation.

10 This distinction and the following examples are drawn from Bach and Harnish 1979: Chapter 6.

11 The communicative theory of nonconventional illocutionary acts is sometimes misconstrued as holding that the performance of such an act involves the communication of the type of act being performed. Blakemore (1990) suggests that this theory implies that, for example, to predict, even when no performative is used or when it is used only parenthetically, is to communicate not just what one is predicting but that one is predicting it. However, the theory does not imply this. It implies only that predicting is an act of communication and that an act of communication is the act of expressing an attitude, such as a belief about the future. The foregoing misconception about the communicative
theory is part of the motivation for Sperber and Wilson’s (1986) “relevance” theory and for Blakemore’s relevance-theoretic account of performatives.

12 This is how Searle puts the point in Speech Acts (1969: 47). Even though understanding is the intended effect of illocutionary acts, he does not regard them merely as acts of communication. In his view, there is more to the performance of an illocutionary act (except for acts like thanking and congratulating) than the “expression of its sincerity condition” (p. 67). But his account of their “essential conditions” does not make clear what this additional element is.

13 The difference between expressing an attitude and actually possessing it is clear from the following definition: to express an attitude in uttering something is reflexively to intend the hearer to take one’s utterance as reason to think one has that attitude (Bach and Harnish 1979: 15). This reason need not be conclusive and if in the context it is overridden, the hearer will, in order to identify the attitude being expressed, search for an alternative and perhaps nonliteral interpretation of the utterance. For discussion see Bach and Harnish (1979: 57-59, 289-91).

14 Correlatively, the hearer can understand the utterance without regarding it as sincere, e.g., take it as expressing regret without believing that the speaker regrets having done the deed in question. Getting one’s audience to believe that one actually possesses the attitude one is expressing is not an illocutionary but a perlocutionary act.

15 Partly because of certain alternative wordings and perhaps indecision (compare his 1969 with his 1957 article), Grice’s analysis is sometimes interpreted as defining communicative intentions iteratively rather than reflexively, but this not only misconstrues Grice’s idea but leads to endless complications (see Strawson 1964 and especially Schiffer 1972 for good illustrations). Recanati (1986) has pointed to certain problems with the iterative approach, but in reply I have argued (Bach 1987a) that these problems do not arise on the reflexive analysis.

16 This question was raised by Schelling (1960), who was the first to discuss games of tacit coordination (pp. 54-58).

17 If the hearer thinks the speaker actually possesses the attitude he is expressing, in effect she is taking him to be sincere in what he is communicating. But there is no question about his being sincere in the communicative intention itself, for this intention must be identified before the question of his sincerity (in having that attitude) can even arise. In other words, deceiving your audience about your real attitude presupposes successfully expressing some other attitude. You can be unsuccessful in conveying your communicative intention — by being too vague, ambiguous, or metaphorical, or even by being wrongly taken literally — but not insincere about it.
For a review of earlier approaches, to what used to be called “contextual implication,” see Hungerland (1960).

See Horn, this volume. Also, see Harnish 1976/1991: 330-40, for discussion of Grice’s maxims, their weaknesses, and their conflicts, and Levinson 2000 for extensive discussion and adaptation of them to various types of generalized conversational implicature.

See Bach and Harnish 1979: 62-65. We replace Grice’s Cooperative Principle with our own CP, the Communicative Presumption.

There is also the question of how costs (of effort) and benefits are to be measured, as well as, because of the tradeoff between cost and benefit, the problem that a given degree of relevance can be achieved in various ways. For all Sperber and Wilson say, their principle of relevance is not equipped to distinguish much benefit at much cost from little benefit at little cost. So their principle has little predictive or explanatory power. Besides, it disregards the essentially reflexive character of communicative intentions and instead assumes that speakers are somehow able to gear their utterances to maximize relevance.

That is why the notion of locutionary acts is indispensable, as Bach and Harnish (1979: 288-89) argue in reply to Searle 1968.

In Bach 1987b I describe such utterances as cases of sentence nonliterality, because the words are being used literally but the sentence as a whole is being used loosely. Compare the sentences mentioned in the text with the similar sentences, “Everybody is going to die” or “I’ve already been in the Army,” which are more likely to be used in a strictly literal way.

Recanati (1989) and I (Bach 1994) have debated whether intuition or syntax constrain what is said, and we have renewed the debate in Recanati 2001 and Bach 2001.

I classify these and many other utterance modifiers in Bach 1999b, sec. 5.

For a collection of sample formulations, see the Appendix to Bach 1999a.

For this reason, I do not accept Stalnaker’s contention that “we need a single concept of context that is both what determines the contents of context-dependent expressions, and also what speech acts act upon” (1999: 4).

In Bach 1999a, I develop and defend this conception of the distinction and contrast it with alternatives.

To the extent that the debate about the semantic-pragmatic distinction isn’t entirely terminological, perhaps the main substantive matter of dispute is whether there is such a thing as “pragmatic intrusion,” whereby pragmatic factors allegedly contribute to semantic interpretation (see Carston and Recanati, this volume). Various linguistic phenomena have been thought to provide evidence for
pragmatic intrusion, hence against the viability of the semantic-pragmatic distinction, but in each case, in my opinion (Bach 1999a), this is an illusion, based on some misconception about the distinction. When it and the related distinctions enumerated above are observed, there is no issue of pragmatic intrusion. Levinson (2000) argues that many alleged cases of pragmatic intrusion are really instances of generalized conversational implicature, which he thinks is often misconstrued as a purely semantic phenomenon.

30 Levinson (2000) describes them as “default meanings,” but he does not mean sentence meanings. He thinks of them as comprising an “intermediate layer” of meaning, of “systematic pragmatic inference based not on direct computations about speaker-intentions but rather on general expectations about how language is normally used, [...] which] give rise to presumptions, default inferences, about both content and force” (2000: 22). In my view, this does not demonstrate an intermediate layer of meaning — there is still only linguistic meaning and speaker meaning — but rather the fact that speakers’ communicative intentions and hearers’ inference are subject to certain systematic constraints based on practice and precedent. See Bach 1995.

31 This sounds like a combination of Grice’s Quantity and Quality maxims, or what Harnish proposed as the “Maxim of Quantity-Quality: Make the strongest relevant claim justifiable by your evidence” (1976/1991: 340; see also note 46, pp. 360-361).

32 We have not addressed the case of so-called subjunctive or counterfactual conditionals. What their truth conditions are is a complex and controversial question (see the relevant essays in Jackson 1991). Compare, e.g., (ii) with (i):

(i) If Oswald didn’t shoot Kennedy, someone else did.

(ii) If Oswald hadn’t shot Kennedy, someone else would have.

Whatever the explanation of the difference, surely it is not due to any ambiguity in if. The would in (ii) suggests that (ii) is to be evaluated hypothetically, but this requires assuming a set of conditions on how the world otherwise is, and exactly what conditions are those?

33 Stanley and Szabó (2000) have offered some ingenious arguments for the claim that quantified noun phrases have domain variables associated with them. I have replied to these arguments in Bach 2000.

34 There is considerable uncertainty about the status of demonstrative descriptions (Neale 1993, Braun 1994).

35 Russell often calls definite descriptions INCOMPLETE SYMBOLS because they “disappear upon logical analysis,” thus making grammatical form is misleading as to logical form. A contemporary Russelian, Stephen Neale (1990), avoids this consequence by employing restricted quantifier notation, with which a description sentence may be represented by the form, “[the x: Fx]Gx”. This notation has the further
benefit of assimilating the form of sentences containing descriptions to that of quantificational sentences in general, both standard ("[some x: Fx]Gx", "[every x: Fx]Gx") and nonstandard ("[most x: Fx]Gx", "[few x: Fx]Gx").

This problem is the topic of many of the articles in Fretheim and Gundel 1996 (see also Gundel & Fretheim, this volume). They pay a great deal of attention to differences among referring expressions in what they signal to the hearer concerning the accessibility of the referent, but they disregard Grice’s fundamental insight that understanding an utterance involves taking into account the fact that the speaker intends one to understand it (it is ironic that this insight underlies the thesis of the very paper, Gundel, Hedberg, and Zacharski 1993, that stimulated much of the work in this volume). One’s inference to the speaker’s intention is always constrained by the consideration that one is intended to make it. So there is no need to suppose, as some of these authors do, that different degrees of accessibility are not merely associated with but, as a matter of linguistic convention, are encoded by different types of referring expressions. The Gricean alternative is that the different degrees of accessibility associated with different types of referring expressions are not encoded at all and that the correlation is instead a by-product of the interaction between semantic information that IS encoded by these expressions and general facts about rational communication. On this, the null hypothesis, it is BECAUSE different expressions are more or less informative that the things they can be used to refer to must be less or more accessible. In other words, the givenness hierarchy is essentially (the inverse of) an informativeness hierarchy: the more “given” the referent is, the less information about it needs to be carried by any expression the speaker need use to refer to it successfully, i.e., to enable the hearer to recognize which thing it is.

This view, due to Mill (1872), is widely held, thanks largely to Kripke (1980), who claims that proper names are “rigid designators” and not, as Russell claimed, “truncated” definite descriptions. I have rebutted Kripke’s anti-descriptivist arguments as they apply to the metalinguistic version of descriptivism, or what I call the “nominal description theory,” on which a name “N” is semantically equivalent to the definite description “the bearer of ‘N’.” I use pragmatic considerations to explain away the “illusion of rigidity” (Bach 1987b, Chapters 7 & 8). Ironically, Millians (other than Braun 1998) use similar considerations to explain away Frege’s puzzles, not realizing that they can be used to undermine the support for Millianism itself, which is what gives rise to Frege’s puzzles in the first place.