

Article

On Defining Communicative Intentions

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1. Introduction

Grice's program, as expounded in his celebrated article 'Meaning' (1957) and subsequent papers, is twofold. He wants: (i) to analyze semantic notions such as sentence meaning or word meaning in terms of a pragmatic notion of communicative intention; and (ii) to provide a reductive analysis of the latter in terms of ordinary, non-communicative intentions. In this paper, I will not be concerned with the first part of Grice's program, but only with the second part. Whereas a number of philosophers seem to think that Grice's program has failed with respect to the former, it is fair to say that it has been quite successful with respect to the latter. There is a general agreement among linguists and philosophers of language interested in pragmatics that something along the Gricean lines provides the foundation for an adequate theory of linguistic communication.¹ Indeed, it has been customary, since Strawson (1964), to assume that the mysterious 'illocutionary acts' of Speech Act Theory can be defined in Gricean terms.²

Before proceeding, a small caveat is in order about my use of the word 'communication' (and related words). One of the basic ideas to be derived from Grice's paper is that linguistic communication is not simply 'communication by means of language'. Independently of the fact that it is performed by means of language, linguistic communication is an instance of a *very special* sort of communication, not necessarily linguistic (nor, for that matter, conventional), which we might call 'Gricean communication'. In this paper, I will assume that this is so – that there is a natural species of communicative behaviour, Gricean communication, such that: (a) it is

¹ See e.g. Bach & Harnish (1979) and Sperber & Wilson (1986).

² This should be qualified in view of the problem raised by the existence of 'institutional' or 'conventional' illocutionary acts. Only ordinary, non-conventional illocutionary acts are commonly assumed to be definable in Gricean terms.

not necessarily linguistic nor conventional; and (b) linguistic communication is an instance of Gricean communication. And I will use 'communication' throughout in the sense of 'Gricean communication'.

Grice does not try to define communication, but there is only a short step from his characterization of the communicative intention to a characterization of communication itself. Here is Grice's characterization of the communicative intention:

- (G) An utterance u^3 is made with a communicative intention – or, in Grice's own terminology, the speaker (S) 'means something' by u – if and only if S utters u intending:
- (G1) S's utterance u to produce a certain response r – e.g. a certain belief – in the audience A,
 - (G2) A to recognize S's intention (G1),
 - (G3) A's recognition of S's intention (G1) to function as at least part of A's reason for A's response r . (That is, the fulfilment of intention (G1) is intended to depend partly on its recognition.)

Starting with this characterization of the communicative intention, it is easy to go on and define an act of communication as an utterance act which manifests an underlying communicative intention. The type and content of the communicative act will depend on *which* response r the speaker intends his utterance to produce.

Related to, and often confused with, Grice's characterization of the communicative intention, there is a widely held thesis, which I shall refer to as 'the Neo-Gricean Claim', according to which the fulfilment of a communicative intention somehow depends on its recognition by the hearer. Here are a few statements of this claim, to be found in the pragmatic literature:

Human communication has some extraordinary properties, not shared by most other kinds of human behavior. One of the most extraordinary is this: If I am trying to tell someone something, then (assuming certain conditions are satisfied) as soon as he recognizes that I am trying to tell him something and exactly what it is I am trying to tell him, I have succeeded in telling it to him. Furthermore, unless he recognizes that I am trying to tell him something and what I am trying to tell him, I do not fully succeed in telling it to him. *In the case of illocutionary acts, we succeed in doing what we are trying to do by getting our audience to recognize what we are trying to do.* (Searle 1969, p.47; my emphasis.)

[Communicative] illocutionary intentions ... are reflexive intentions, in the sense of H. P. Grice (1957): a reflexive intention is an intention

³ Following Grice, I use 'utterance' as a neutral word to apply to any candidate for the status of communicative behaviour.

that is intended to be recognized as intended to be recognized. We further restrict illocutionary intentions to those intentions whose fulfilment consists in nothing more than their recognition. (Bach & Harnish 1979, pp.xiv–xv).

Speech acts are publications of intentions: the primary aim of a speech act is to produce an object – the speech act itself – which is perceptible publicly, and in particular to the audience, embodying an intention whose content is precisely a recognizable performance of that very speech act. Recognition by an audience that such an intention has been made public in this way leaves nothing further needing to happen for the intention to be fulfilled. (McDowell 1980, p.130).

Let us call an intention which is meant to be recognized, and which is fulfilled merely by being recognized, a *communicative intention*. Then the central aim of pragmatic theory must be to explain how the speaker's communicative intentions are recognized. (Sperber & Wilson 1983, p.10)⁴

There are at least two distinguishable versions of the Neo-Gricean Claim, a weak and a strong one. On the weak version, audience's recognition of the communicative intention is sufficient for its fulfilment, whereas on the strong version it is both necessary and sufficient. Neither of these versions, however, can be ascribed to Grice. There is, in Grice's characterization (G), an intention whose fulfilment is linked to its recognition, but it is not the communicative or illocutionary intention as such – it is one of the sub-intentions which jointly constitute the communicative intention. Moreover, it cannot be said that recognition of this sub-intention is a *sufficient* condition of its being fulfilled, but only that it is *likely* to play a role in its fulfilment, and that it is *intended* to play such a role.

Grice's characterization (G) raises various problems and objections that have often been discussed in the literature. My aim, in this paper, is to consider how (G) should be amended to meet (some of) these objections, and to see whether the Neo-Gricean Claim can be vindicated on the basis of the amended characterization.

2. *Perlocutionary vs Communicative Intentions*

S's intention (G1), the first of the three sub-intentions by means of which Grice analyzes the communicative intention, is the intention that the utterance produce a certain response *r* in the audience, e.g. belief if the utterance belongs to the assertive type, and action, or intention to act, if

⁴ In the final version of their work on relevance (Sperber & Wilson 1986), Sperber & Wilson have given up this view of communicative intentions. See below, Section 10 and note 15.

the utterance belongs to the directive type. I will refer to this intention as the utterer's 'perlocutionary' intention.⁵

Grice's inclusion of the perlocutionary intention *within* the communicative intention raises the following objection. The communicative intention is the intention with which something must be uttered if the utterance is to count as communication in the relevant sense. Now it is possible to communicate something without *having* intention (G1). I can make an assertion without intending the audience to believe what I say (or to believe that I believe it), and I can ask A to do something without intending A to do it (or to form the intention to do it). But if the perlocutionary intention was part of the communicative intention, it would not be possible to communicate without having the perlocutionary intention. So the perlocutionary intention is not a part of the communicative intention.

In defense of Grice's original analysis (G), it can be objected that my argument to the effect that intention (G1) cannot be a necessary part of the communicative intention is an instance of *petitio principii*. I use as a premiss the fact that it is possible to perform a communicative act such as assertion without having the corresponding perlocutionary intention; but from this to conclude that the communicative intention cannot incorporate the perlocutionary intention, I need a further premiss, (P):

(P) It is not possible to communicate without having the communicative intention.

In effect, I took (P) for granted when I said, in the course of my argument, that the communicative intention is the intention that a communicator must have if her utterance is to count as communication. But this assumption is too strong, and Grice is not committed to it. It is open to Grice to say that the 'communicative intention', which he analyzes as the conjunction of (G1), (G2) and (G3), is an intention such that (a) a communicator *typically* (but not necessarily) has this intention, and (b) an utterance act counts as a communicative act if and only if it makes an intention of this sort *manifest*. So (P) should be replaced by (P*):

(P*) It is not possible to communicate without having, or making manifest that one has, the communicative intention.

⁵ Austin (1962) calls 'perlocutionary' the empirical effects or consequences of a communicative act. (The distinctive property of perlocutionary effects is that the communicative act can, at least in principle, be successfully performed without these effects being brought about.) A perlocutionary intention is thus the intention that one's communicative act produce a given perlocutionary effect. A typical perlocutionary intention of a speaker who asserts that p is that the hearer form the belief that p, a typical perlocutionary intention of a speaker who orders that p is that the hearer obey, and so on.

Replacing (P) by (P*) makes a big difference, since it is far from obvious that only actual intentions can be made manifest. If we use Sperber & Wilson's definition of manifestness (Sperber & Wilson 1986, ch.1, Section 8), we will say that something is manifest (to a person) if and only if it is perceptible or inferable (by this person). But it is clearly possible to infer something that is *false*. If I believe (falsely) that it is raining outside, it will be manifest to me, i.e. inferable, that the pavement is wet, even though the pavement is not, in fact, wet. In the same way, it is possible for the audience to infer, from an utterance and some background knowledge, that the speaker has a communicative intention, even though he has no such intention. This means that an utterance *u* may well manifest (and, perhaps, be intended to manifest) a communicative intention that the speaker does not in fact have; it is therefore possible, at least in principle, to communicate something without having the relevant communicative intention, since to communicate is to make a communicative intention manifest by one's utterance. That being so, the objection against incorporating the perlocutionary intention within the communicative intention vanishes. It is indeed possible to communicate without having the perlocutionary intention, but this does not show that the perlocutionary intention can't be a part of the communicative intention, since it is also conceivable that one communicates without having the communicative intention.

Some will think that the move from (P) to (P*) should be resisted, and that communication without communicative intention is not really communication. I will not go into this dispute, since the retreat from (P) to (P*) does not seriously affect my point about perlocutionary intentions. Even if (P*) is true and (P) is not, the communicative intention cannot be said to incorporate the perlocutionary intention. For I can communicate without even making 'manifest' that I have intention (G1). I may well assert that *p* even though it is obvious to everybody that I do not intend my audience to believe what I say or to believe that I believe it. (In this context, my utterance does not make manifest that I have the perlocutionary intention, since it is manifest that I do not have it.) So, whether we define the communicative intention as an intention which the speaker must have, or only as an intention which his utterance should make manifest, if his utterance act is to count as communication, in any case this intention cannot incorporate, as it does in Grice's analysis (G), the perlocutionary intention (G1).

Intention (G1) being discarded as a necessary part of the communicative intention, intention (G3) must be discarded too, for it presupposes intention (G1). One cannot 'intend the utterance to produce in A a given response *r* by means of A's recognition of S's intention to produce that response' without actually intending to produce response *r*. But, as I said, one can communicate without intending (or making manifest the intention) to produce response *r*. It follows that one can communicate without having (or making manifest) intention (G3), i.e. without intending

(or making manifest that one intends) A's recognition of intention (G1) to function as at least part of A's reason for A's response *r*.⁶

3. *The Factivity Problem*

Both intention (G1) and intention (G3) being discarded, we are left with intention (G2). Indeed, I think the speaker's communicative intention is something *like* intention (G2). But this has to be elaborated a bit. Intention (G2) cannot be squarely identified with the speaker's communicative intention.

Intention (G2) – S's intention that A recognize S's intention (G1) – also presupposes intention (G1). This is so because 'recognize' is a factive verb, like 'know'. What does not exist cannot be known or recognized. S cannot intend A to recognize his intention (G1) if he does not have this intention. But S can communicate without having (or making manifest) intention (G1). It follows that S can communicate without having (or making manifest) intention (G2), which means that intention (G2) can't be identified with the communicative intention.

It is possible, of course, to modify the formulation of intention (G2) and to put a non factive verb, 'believe', in place of 'recognize'. Thus modified, intention (G2) becomes intention (G2*):

(G2*) [S's intention] that A believe that S uttered *u* with intention (G1).

But this will not do either. If I assert that *p*, the corresponding perlocutionary intention (G1) is supposed to be either the intention that A believe that *p* or the intention that A believe that I believe that *p*. Now, as I said earlier, I can assert that *p* even though it is obvious to everybody that I do not intend A to believe either that *p* or that I believe that *p*. A case in point would be a context where A and I 'mutually know' that not-*p*, i.e. a context where we both know (a) that not-*p*, (b) that we both know that not-*p*, (c) that we both know that we both know that not-*p*, and so on. Suppose that I assert that *p* in such a context. Obviously, I do not intend A to believe that I made my assertion with intention (G1), and I do not even make manifest an intention that A believe that I have intention (G1); it is, on the contrary, manifest that I do not have intention (G1) and that I do not intend A to believe that I have intention (G1). Still, I communicate, and this implies either that I have the communicative intention or that I make 'manifest' that I have the communicative intention;

⁶ There is another reason for discarding intention (G3). Searle (1969, pp.46–7) and Schiffer (1972, Section 2.3) have shown that even when S intends to produce response *r*, that is, even when intention (G1) is part of the speaker's overall intention, he need not intend this intention, i.e. intention (G1), to be fulfilled (partly) by means of its recognition. The examples (reminding, arguing, etc.) are well known, and I will pursue this line of argument no further.

but I do not have, nor does my utterance make manifest that I have, the intention that A believe that I have the perlocutionary intention; so (G2*), the intention that A believe that I have the perlocutionary intention, cannot be (part of) the communicative intention.

So we have to find something other than 'believe' to put in place of 'recognize'. Many philosophers (Armstrong 1971, Schiffer 1972, Holdcroft 1978, Bach & Harnish 1979) have used the phrase 'to give someone reason to believe', and we might, accordingly, replace (G2*) by (G2**):

(G2**) [S's intention] to provide A with reason to believe that S has intention (G1).

Before considering this suggestion in some detail, however, there is an objection that should first be met.

4. An Objection Against Analyzing Communicative Intentions in Terms of Perlocutionary Intentions

Following Grice, what we are trying to do is to analyze communicative or illocutionary intentions in terms of ordinary, 'perlocutionary' intentions. We no longer wish to *include* perlocutionary intentions within communicative intentions, but this does not prevent us from analyzing communicative intentions *in terms of* perlocutionary intentions. Some philosophers, however, have made a claim which, if true, would undermine the very principle of such a reductive analysis.

The philosophers I have in mind are, most prominently, Austin (1962, pp.138–9) and Searle (1969, p.46). Both say that, for some illocutionary acts, there is no corresponding typical perlocutionary intention. I don't know whether this is true, but let's suppose it is. Let's grant the objection. What is undermined, I think, is not the principle of a reductive analysis of communicative intentions in terms of more mundane things like perlocutionary intentions, but rather a specific proposal which explicitly mentions perlocutionary intentions. There are, however, other possibilities for a reductive analysis in the spirit of Grice.

At this point, I want to introduce the notion of prototypicality conditions. It's a part of our prototype of assertion that, if someone asserts that *p*, he knows that *p* and wishes the hearer to share his knowledge. In the same way, if someone orders someone else to do something, then, prototypically, he wants the thing to be done and has some kind of authority over the addressee. These prototypicality conditions – in the case of assertion, knowing that *p* and intending the hearer to share this knowledge – are not necessary conditions for performing the act. I will not try to analyze here the notion of prototypicality that is involved; I rely on an intuitive understanding of the notion.

When, for some illocutionary act, there is a corresponding typical perlocutionary intention, as in the two cases I've just mentioned (asserting and ordering), this intention is one of the prototypicality conditions of the

act. But there are other conditions, for example, attitudes of the speaker other than intentions (e.g. beliefs). Some prototypicality conditions need not even be attitudes of the speaker.⁷ Now what I suggest is that we use prototypicality conditions instead of perlocutionary intentions in our tentative definitions of the communicative intention. So, for instance, instead of (G2**), S's intention to provide A with reason to believe that S has intention (G1), we will have (G2a):

(G2a) [S's intention] to provide A with reason to believe that such and such prototypicality conditions are satisfied.⁸

These prototypicality conditions may, but need not, include the speaker's having a given perlocutionary intention. In this way, the question whether for each illocutionary act there is a corresponding prototypical perlocutionary intention is left open. (In what follows, I will sometimes use 'PC' as an abbreviation for 'such-and-such prototypicality conditions obtain', or 'that such-and-such prototypicality conditions obtain', or 'the fact that such-and-such prototypicality conditions obtain'.)

5. *Reasons to Believe*

Can the communicative intention be analyzed as (G2a), i.e. S's intention to provide A with reason to believe that such-and-such prototypicality conditions obtain? How we answer this question depends on what is meant by 'reason to believe'. Alston, for example, raises the following objection against Holdcroft's (and Schiffer's) use of this notion:

On [Holdcroft's] account, a necessary condition of my, e.g. answering that *p* is that I openly intend that my utterance in its context should provide A with reason to think that *p* is the correct answer to his question. Again it is a necessary condition of my ordering A to do *y* that I openly intend that my utterance in its context should provide A with reason to think that I want A to comply with my 'directive', i.e. to do *y*. But both of these seem to me to be false. Surely I can answer your question without having any such intention. I may be answering just to be polite, or just 'for the record'. It may be perfectly clear to me that there is not the slightest chance of A's supposing that *p* is the correct answer to his question. In fact, I may explicitly say that, and still go ahead and answer that *p*. Having made it completely explicit that I do

⁷ It can be said, for instance, that *the fact that P* (and not only the *belief that P*) is a prototypicality condition of the statement that P: prototypically, one states that P only if P.

⁸ I should perhaps emphasize that in the complex phrase 'the intention to provide A with reason to believe that such and such prototypicality conditions are satisfied', the occurrence of the constituent phrase 'such and such prototypicality conditions' is meant to be wholly transparent.

not think there is the slightest chance that A would suppose this, I could hardly be credited with the intention of doing something that would give A a good reason for supposing this; and yet I am still answering that *p*. It is even more obvious that I could be ordering someone to do something without intending to give him reason to suppose that I want him to do it. In fact, I might make explicit that I do not *want* him to do it, but issue the order anyway, because it is my job to do so. (Alston 1982, pp.625–626)

This objection can be met, however, by weakening the notion of ‘reason to believe’. We must use a notion of ‘reason to believe’ such that, if I intend to give someone a reason to believe that *p*, I do not necessarily intend him to believe that *p*. To handle Alston’s alleged counter-examples, it must be consistent both to intend A to have reason to believe that *p* and to intend him *not* to believe that *p*. I can, for instance, intend him both to find some evidence that *p* and to discard this evidence in the light of some (stronger) counter-evidence. In such a case, I intend A to have a reason to believe that *p*, but I also intend this reason to be an *insufficient* reason for him to believe that *p*. Quite consistently, I intend A not to believe what I intend him to have reason to believe.

In their book on speech acts, Bach & Harnish (1979, Section 3.6) make this point explicitly. They say that the ‘reason to believe’ with which the hearer is provided need not be a *sufficient* reason. They don’t go far enough, however, when they attempt (p.291) to give an analysis of this notion. Quite misleadingly, they say that the speaker intends her utterance to give the hearer a reason, *sufficient unless there is a mutually believed reason to the contrary*, to believe the speaker has such and such an attitude. But they overlook the fact that the intended ‘reason’ may well be insufficient even though there is no *mutually believed* reason to the contrary.

Let me say a bit more about this notion of (not necessarily sufficient) reason to believe. This notion can be defined by means of another, related notion, that of a ‘good reason’ to believe something, which I define as follows:

(GRB) A fact *P* provides ‘good reason’ to believe that *Q* with respect to a context – a set of propositions – *C* if and only if *Q* can be concluded from *P* and *C* but not from *C* alone.

‘Can be concluded’ does not mean ‘can be deduced’. I allow here for non-demonstrative inference. For example, suppose a context including a single proposition, ‘In general (or: typically), *P* implies *Q*’. With respect to such a context, one can conclude *Q* from *P*, even though no deduction of *Q* is possible.⁹ If I hear that a friend of mine keeps a bird in her flat, and if I

⁹ Of course, such a nondemonstrative inference can be *analyzed* partly in deductive terms as (a) adding to the context a new proposition, such as ‘The present situation is typical or falls under the general case’, and (b) deducing *Q* from *P* with respect to the enlarged context. But I am not concerned here with how to analyze non-demonstrative inference.

know nothing else of the bird in question, I am entitled to conclude that she keeps an animal that can fly. The reason why I can conclude this is that the context includes, as part of my encyclopedic knowledge, the proposition 'in general, birds can fly', and no proposition implying that *this* bird cannot fly. In this context, the fact that she keeps a bird gives me good reason to believe that she keeps an animal that can fly.

Now I suggest that we define 'reason to believe' in the following way:

- (RB) A fact P provides a reason to believe that Q with respect to a context C if and only if there is a context z which is a subset of C and with respect to which P provides good reason to believe that Q.

This leaves open the possibility that C includes some proposition (not included in z) which prevents Q from being actually concluded from P, for example the proposition that my friend's bird is an ostrich or a penguin. But even though one cannot conclude, in such a context C, that my friend keeps an animal that can fly, still one is given a reason to believe it. This reason – the fact that my friend keeps a bird – is not a good reason with respect to C; the inference from 'she keeps a bird' to 'she keeps an animal that can fly' is blocked in C by a piece of knowledge that prevents exploiting by default the proposition 'in general, birds can fly'. But in order to be blocked, the inference has to be somehow in the offing, and the notion of P's being a reason to believe that Q captures the idea of a potential inference from P to Q in the context C.

6. *Why Communicative Intentions are Self-fulfilling*

One peculiar feature of the communicative intention, analyzed so far as the intention (G2a), that the utterance *u* give the hearer reason to believe PC, is that its recognition by the hearer necessarily results in its fulfilment. Once this intention is recognized to lie behind the utterance, the utterance cannot but give the hearer reason to believe PC. Or, in other terms: S's having this intention (to give A reason to believe PC) provides the hearer with reason to believe PC. This peculiar feature – the 'self-fulfilling' character of communicative intentions, which vindicates the Neo-Gricean Claim in its weak form – is what I will now try to explain.

It has often been said that a general presumption of truthfulness – in the sense both of sincerity and reliability – is at work in human communication. The effect of this presumption can be described both with respect to normal and abnormal situations. In a normal situation, where there is no reason to be suspicious, the speaker's displaying an intention to give A reason to believe PC provides good reason to believe PC (in the same way as my friend's keeping a bird gives me good reason to believe she keeps an animal that can fly, owing to the general presumption that birds can fly). In an abnormal situation, whatever good reason the hearer has to be suspicious prevents him from exploiting the general presumption

of truthfulness, but still, according to my definitions, the speaker's intention gives the hearer reason to believe. The context C with respect to which the hearer interprets the utterance includes both the general presumption of truthfulness and the specific knowledge of the hearer which makes him suspicious of the speaker. This knowledge prevents A from actually concluding PC, but there is a context z which is a subset of C and with respect to which PC can be concluded – namely the context that results from removing from C the specific knowledge that goes against the general presumption.

What this shows is that the hearer's recognition of the communicative intention is a sufficient condition of its fulfilment. But some philosophers have gone further: it has been said, although not much argued, that fulfilment of the communicative intention merely consists in its being recognized, or, put another way, that its recognition is both necessary and sufficient for its fulfilment. This is the Strong Neo-Gricean Claim (SNGC, for short). What are we to think of it?

7. Back to Grice

Prima facie, the claim is false, even strikingly so. Recognition by the hearer cannot be necessary to the fulfilment of the speaker's communicative intention, if this intention is merely the intention that *u* provide A with reason to believe PC. Surely a given action of mine could, in a suitable context, give A reason to believe that such-and-such conditions obtain, independently of A's recognizing or not recognizing my intention to provide such a reason. An action of mine could be good evidence that PC even though I do not even intend it to provide such evidence.

There is, however, an easy way of supporting the claim that hearer's recognition of S's intention (G2a) is necessary to the fulfilment of the speaker's communicative intention. We just have to say that the communicative intention is identical not with (G2a) but with the sum of (G2a) and a further sub-intention that (G2a) be recognized:

(D1)

communicative intention	{	intention (G2a) that <i>u</i> provide A with reason to believe PC
		intention (G2b) that (G2a) be recognized

If the communicative intention *includes* the intention that the hearer recognize the speaker's intention to give him reason to believe PC, then, of course, the speaker's communicative intention cannot be fulfilled unless the hearer recognizes that intention. (Note, however, that SNGC is not vindicated at this stage: what is required for the communicative intention to be fulfilled is not that the hearer recognize the communicative intention, but that he recognize one of the two sub-intentions it includes.)

Including (G2b) in the communicative intention is far from being an *ad hoc* move. It is clearly not enough, for S to communicate something, that he utter *u* intending *u* to give A reason to believe that certain conditions obtain. If S does not have the further intention that A recognize S's intention to give him reason to believe PC, what he has performed is definitely not an act of Gricean communication.

If we add (G2b), we may be tempted to add also a third sub-intention, (G2c):

intention (G2c): that the fulfilment of (G2a) depend on its recognition

Once this sub-intention is added, *only* recognition of the speaker's intention (G2a) will count as providing the kind of evidence (of 'reason to believe') that a communicator, *qua* communicator, intends to provide. This addition thus would have the effect of ruling out cases where the speaker, although he intends his intention (G2a) to be recognized, does not intend the fulfilment of (G2a) to depend crucially on its recognition – cases where S's utterance is intended to provide A with evidence that PC over and above the evidence provided by S's (recognized) intention to provide such evidence.

Notice that these three intentions, (G2a), (G2b) and (G2c), lead us back to Grice's original formulaton (G):

Grice's original account

communicative intention	{	intention (G1) that <i>u</i> produce in A a certain response <i>r</i> intention (G2) that A recognize intention (G1) intention (G3) that the fulfilment of (G1) depend on its recognition
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Revised Account

communicative intention	{	intention (G2a) that <i>u</i> provide A with reason to believe that PC intention (G2b) that A recognize intention (G2a) intention (G2c) that the fulfilment of (G2a) depend on its recognition
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The only difference between Grice's original account and the Revised Account lies in the fact that, according to the latter, the first intention in the triple is not an intention to produce in A a certain (perlocutionary) 'response', but rather, as Sperber & Wilson would say, an intention to modify A's cognitive environment by providing him with a certain type of evidence which he may, or may not, use to form beliefs and produce whatever 'responses' he is likely to produce.

Although neither (D1) nor the Revised Account just stated justify the strong version of the Neo-Gricean Claim, there is but a short step from (D1) or the Revised Account to a definition of the communicative intention that *would* justify it. Before turning to that, however, let's first consider

whether there is any good reason for including in the communicative intention the sub-intention (G2c), which distinguishes the Revised Account from (D1).

8. *Gricean Communication Consistent with 'Natural Meaning'*

I think we should *not* add intention (G2c), or rather, I don't see *why* we should add this sub-intention. There are many cases where the utterance provides (and is intended to provide) evidence for PC over and above the evidence provided by the speaker's intention to provide such evidence. Take Grice's example of Herod bringing to Salome the severed head of John the Baptist. By this 'utterance', the 'speaker' S (= Herod) openly intends to provide A (= Salome) with reason to believe that the following conditions obtain: John is dead, S knows that John is dead and S wants A to share this knowledge. Why should this not be considered a case of communication? Grice's reason for excluding this case is that for (an important part of) the speaker's intention to be fulfilled it is not *necessary* that his intention be recognized: the severed head of John the Baptist, *by itself*, is evidence that he is dead, and to conclude that it is so A doesn't have to recognize S's intention. Grice is right to point out that there are two sorts of cases, cases where only the speaker's intention is intended to provide evidence (this is what Grice calls 'non-natural meaning', and it is indeed central in linguistic communication) and cases where the 'utterance' is intended to provide evidence over and above the evidence provided by the speaker's intention. But there is no reason, it seems to me, to restrict the label '(Gricean) communication' to the first sort of cases, however important they are.

It is, of course, possible to do so by stipulation. But the question we are ultimately interested in is that of linguistic communication. We assume that linguistic communication is Gricean, and we seek an account of Gricean communication. That being so, the Revised Account – and Grice's original account, for that matter – are too restrictive. They imply that linguistic communication is *never* 'natural', i.e. that never does a speaker intend his (linguistic) utterance to provide evidence that PC over and above the evidence provided by his recognized intention to provide such evidence. This seems to me to be patently false. Here is an example: My friend and I are walking in a crowded place, and she loses track of me although I am not at all far. I tell her: 'I am here'. I thereby communicate to her that I am here, but to her my utterance is also a natural sign of the fact that I am here. Even if I had said something different to somebody else – with no recognizable intention to communicate to her where I am – the sheer sound of my voice in the vicinity would have indicated my location to her, exactly in the same way as John the Baptist's head indicates to Salome that he is dead. Moreover, the 'natural' meaning of my utterance is not just a matter of fact: I *intend* my utterance to provide the hearer with some evidence independent of the evidence provided by my recognized

intention. This case, it seems to me, is exactly parallel to the Salome case.¹⁰ So if I have performed an act of Gricean communication in the linguistic case, there is no reason to deny that Herod may very well have done so by showing Salome the severed head. So let us forget the Revised Account and stick to (D1).

9. *Overtiness: the Case for Reflexivity*

Contrary to intention (G2c), intention (G2b) seems to be a necessary part of the communicative intention. S's intention (G2a) is not a communicative intention if it is not 'overt' and intended to be recognized.

Adding (G2b), however, is not enough. As Strawson (1964, Section 3) pointed out, S's intention that p is not 'overt' just by virtue of S's having a further intention to the effect that the first intention be recognized. If, as in Strawson's famous counter-example, S intends that p and intends A to recognize his intention that p, but intends A *not* to recognize his intention that A recognize his intention that p, then S's intention that p is not 'wholly overt'. (G2b) was meant to capture the (intuitive) idea that communicative intentions are overt and intended to be recognized. But, as Strawson's counter-example shows, adding this condition is not *sufficient* to constitute the case as one of attempted communication: it seems that the new intention (G2b) also must be intended to be recognized. More generally, it seems that for each intention that must be added in order to have a case of overt communication, there must be a further intention that this intention be recognized.

Counter-examples of the Strawsonian type show that adding (G2b) is necessary, but not sufficient. What seems to be required to rule out these counter-examples is an infinity of such intentions, which is quite embarrassing. A solution to this problem is to add not (G2b) but (G2b*):

(D2)

Communicative intention	}	intention (G2a) that <i>u</i> provide A with reason to believe PC
		intention (G2b*) that the communicative intention be recognized

¹⁰ The similarity goes further than what I've just indicated. To recognize S's communicative intention it is necessary, in the case of Herod, to first recognize the natural meaning of the sign (Salome recognizes what Herod means by first recognizing what the severed head of John the Baptist 'naturally' means). Similarly, in the linguistic case, the hearer doesn't know what is said, and so what the speaker intends to (linguistically) communicate, if she does not grasp the 'natural meaning' of the utterance: she does not know *who* is said to be *where* if she does not infer, from the familiar voice she is hearing and from its proximity, that *I* am speaking to her and that *I* am *here*.

For further criticisms of Grice's third sub-intention, see Schiffer (1972, pp.57-58) and Sperber & Wilson (1986, ch. 1, Section 10).

Adding (G2b*) makes the communicative intention reflexive in a genuine sense. Owing to this reflexivity, the communicative intention now entails the infinite number of intentions required to rule out the Strawsonian counter-examples.¹¹

If we accept this new, reflexive formulation of the communicative intention, we must also accept the claim that recognition by the hearer is not only sufficient, but also necessary to the fulfilment of the communicative intention. Clearly the communicative intention, if it includes the intention that the communicative intention be recognized, cannot be fulfilled unless it is recognized. But should we accept the new formulation? It is far from obvious that we should. As we shall see in the next sections, reflexivity raises problems, and reflexive intentions are, on the whole, unwelcome. This means that there must be a good reason for positing reflexive intentions: an account dispensing with reflexive intentions will be preferred, *ceteris paribus*, to an account which requires them.

10. An Argument Against Reflexive Intentions

Sperber & Wilson raise the following objection against reflexive intentions:

It might seem that a single reflexive intention is psychologically more plausible than an infinity of intentions, but we doubt this for the following reason. Normally, when a representation contains a definite reference to a representation, this representation can be replaced by a mention of the representation referred to. For instance (a) contains a definite reference to the representation expressed by Mary and spelled out in (b); hence (c) can be validly inferred from (a–b):

- (a) Peter believes what Mary said
- (b) Mary said that it is raining
- (c) Hence: Peter believes that it is raining.

Often, understanding a representation such as (a) (...) involves just such a substitution. A case in point is a communicator's intention *I* that her audience should recognize her intention *J*: intention *I* cannot be fulfilled or fully grasped without grasping *J*. With a reflexive intention *I* which includes the sub-intention that the audience recognize *I*, this yields an infinitely long formula. [But] infinitely long formulas are not available, let alone intelligible, to the mind ... (Sperber & Wilson 1986, ch.1 n.20)

¹¹ The expression 'reflexive intention' is often used (e.g. by Searle 1969) to mean an intention whose fulfilment depends and/or is intended to depend on its recognition. Here I use 'reflexive intention' in a stronger sense, to mean an intention which includes the intention that it *itself* be recognized. On this notion, see Recanati (1979, pp.180–1 n.2), and Blackburn (1984, pp.114–117).

The gist of Sperber & Wilson's (psychological) objection is that, fully spelled out, S's alleged reflexive intention would include the intention that A recognize S's intention that A recognize S's intention that A recognize ... and so on *ad infinitum*. In other words, such an intention *cannot* be fully spelled out, and this seems to imply, according to Sperber & Wilson, that it cannot be grasped. In drawing that conclusion, Sperber & Wilson rely on premiss (S):

- (S) Often, a meta-representation containing a definite reference to another representation cannot be grasped or understood if the representation referred to can't be spelled out.

This section and the next two will be devoted to an examination of premiss (S) and of Sperber & Wilson's argument.

Let's start with Sperber & Wilson's meta-representation (a), i.e. 'Peter believes what Mary said'. This representation of a psychological state of Peter contains a reference to another representation, namely the representation which constitutes the content of Peter's belief. I will call this second representation (a*). In (a), (a*) is referred to as 'what Mary said', but (a*) is not 'spelled out'. To spell out a representation such as (a*) is to display it. (b) and (c) are two meta-representations (of Mary's utterance and Peter's belief respectively) where (a*), the common content of Mary's utterance and Peter's belief, is spelled out. (In section 12, I will call such meta-representations where the representation referred to is displayed or spelled out 'singular meta-representations'. A meta-representation such as (a) will be called a 'general meta-representation'.)

Whether or not (S) is true, it is clear that understanding a meta-representation such as (a) does not *always* involve spelling out, or being able to spell out, the representation referred to. To understand (a), in some cases at least, one does not have to (be able to) spell out (a*). Even if I don't know what Mary said, I understand what is meant by 'Peter believes what Mary said': I grasp this representation as a representation of the fact that Peter's belief has the same content as Mary's utterance. This is true at least if 'the meta-representation (a)' we are talking about is the representation that the sentence (a) expresses when the description 'what Mary said' is used attributively in Donnellan's sense. When the description is used referentially, it may be that knowing what Mary said is required to understand the meta-representation expressed by (a). I will come back to this issue in the next section, but for the moment it suffices to note that when a meta-representation such as (a) contains an attributive reference to a representation, the latter does not have to be spelled out in order for the former to be grasped.

From what I've just said it follows that there are meta-representations that can be grasped even if the representation they refer to can't be spelled out. We can, for example, make (a) reflexive and paradoxical by spelling out what Mary said in the following way: Mary said that Peter's belief reported in (a) is true. Although, in this case, we know what Mary said, still we can't *fully* spell out what Peter believes, because the representation

which is the content of Mary's utterance is itself a meta-representation and the representation it refers to can't be spelled out. Nevertheless, the meta-representation corresponding to the attributive reading of (a) can still be grasped in this situation.

Simon Blackburn gives a more straightforward example of a reflexive intention that can be grasped (although *qua* reflexive intention it can't be spelled out):

Imagine a certain kind of love affair. I want you to know *everything* about me. And everything includes, especially, the fact that I have this want. If you didn't know that about me, you might suspect me of concealment, and I wouldn't want that. (Blackburn 1984, p.117)

Blackburn adds: 'There is no paradox here, and no regress either'. I am not quite sure about that, since if we try to spell out all the things that Blackburn's lover is intended to know about Blackburn, the list will be infinite. But this raises no problem, since in order to understand Blackburn's reflexive intention we clearly don't have to spell out all the things that Blackburn intends his lover to know about him. We understand Blackburn's intention once we know that it is the intention that Blackburn's lover know *everything* about Blackburn.

What all this shows is that something is missing in Sperber & Wilson's argument. Blackburn's example convincingly demonstrates that reflexive intentions *per se* are not impossible to grasp. Reflexivity implies impossibility to spell out, and (S) says that impossibility to spell out 'often' implies an impossibility to grasp. Yes, but when? To fill in their argument, Sperber & Wilson must say what sort of meta-representation is such that the impossibility to spell out the representation referred to implies an impossibility to understand or entertain the meta-representation; and they must show that a reflexive communicative intention would be a meta-representation of precisely that sort.

11. Linguistic and Mental Representations

I have said that, on the referential reading, the hearer does not understand (a) if he does not know more about the representation referred to than what is given by the description 'what Mary said': the hearer must know what Mary said, and not just that Mary said something, to understand the meta-representation on this referential reading. Similarly with (d):

(d) This belief of Paul's is really crazy.

(d) can't be understood unless one identifies the representation (the belief) referred to. So we have at least some examples of the phenomenon Sperber & Wilson have in mind. (We note, moreover, that a reflexive intention

such as 'the intention that this very intention be recognized' looks very much like (d), in that both meta-representations contain a demonstrative reference.)

From these two examples – (a) on its referential reading, and (d) – can we argue that sometimes to understand a meta-representation we must be able to spell out the representation referred to? Can we thus vindicate premiss (S)? I am not quite sure. Although in these two cases it is indeed necessary for understanding the meta-representation to know more about the representation referred to than what is given in the meta-representation itself, it is not obvious that spelling out or entertaining the very representation that is referred to is actually needed. It may be enough for understanding the meta-representation to identify the representation referred to, in whatever way one does so, whether by spelling out the representation or otherwise. But – and this is the important point – even if from these two examples it was clearly possible to vindicate (S), I would argue against this as evidence that the communicative intention can't be reflexive. I would – and I will – argue that (S), in so far as it can be vindicated on the basis of these two examples (the one with a referentially used description and the one with a demonstrative), is irrelevant to the issue we are discussing, that of reflexive intentions.

The crux of the matter is the distinction between mental and linguistic representations.¹² They have some properties in common: they are representations, and they contain references to various things. But they do not have all their properties in common. So one cannot generalize and infer from a truth about linguistic representations to a truth about mental representations. Now the two examples I've just mentioned as supporting (S) are examples of *linguistic* meta-representations. It is (d) *qua* linguistic utterance containing a demonstrative expression that can't be understood if the representation referred to by the demonstrative expression cannot be identified or spelled out. To understand an utterance with a demonstrative expression, one must be able to form an 'information-based thought', and this implies being able to identify the referent of the demonstrative expression (Evans 1982). So (S) is vindicated by this example only if (S) is allowed to range over linguistic meta-representations. The same thing holds for the other example, i.e. the 'referential' reading of (a). It is sentences, not mental representations, that contain definite descriptions used referentially; and a referential use of a description can be understood only if the referent is somehow identified. So in this case also the example supports (S), but does so only if the meta-representations in (S) are allowed to be linguistic representations. In other words, what both examples support is (S*) rather than (S) *simpliciter*:

¹² Sperber & Wilson do not distinguish the two sorts of representations in the course of their argument. They speak of 'representations' generally. (They use some terminology connected with linguistic representations, which can be 'understood', and some connected with mental representations, which can be 'grasped'.)

- (S*) Sometimes, a linguistic meta-representation can't be understood if the representation referred to can't be spelled out.

From (S*), however, we cannot conclude that reflexive intentions, as meta-representations whose referent cannot be spelled out, are psychologically impossible, because reflexive intentions are *mental* meta-representations, and (S*) works only for linguistic meta-representations. This is a serious problem, since there is no plausible counterpart of (S*) in the domain of mental representations. I am ready to accept that there are some *linguistic* meta-representations like (d) such that to understand them (i.e. to associate a complete mental representation with them) we have to spell out the representation referred to or at least to identify it in some independent way; but I do not think there is any mental representation containing a reference to (and not a 'mention' or 'display' of) a representation, and such that to entertain the meta-representation one has to spell out, or be able to spell out, the representation referred to. As I will show in the next section, either a mental meta-representation incorporates the very representation it refers to – in which case the representation referred to is already displayed or spelled out at the level of the meta-representation – or, if the meta-representation does not incorporate the very representation that is referred to, then the latter does not have to be spelled out for the former to be grasped.

12. *The Real Trouble with Reflexive Intentions*

As far as *mental* meta-representations are concerned, they are of two sorts: singular and general meta-representations. A singular meta-representation refers to a representation by *displaying* that representation; it *incorporates* the representation it refers to. (b) and (c) in Sperber & Wilson's quotation are examples of singular meta-representations. Since a singular meta-representation incorporates the representation it refers to (the 'object-representation', as it were), it can't be grasped if the object-representation can't be grasped. This is the case in particular when the object-representation is infinitely expanded.

A general meta-representation refers to a representation without displaying or incorporating that representation; what the meta-representation incorporates is not the object-representation itself, but a concept under which the object representation falls. It is thus possible to grasp a general meta-representation without being able to identify, let alone to entertain, the representation referred to. When the definite description is read attributively, (a) expresses a general meta-representation, a meta-representation, therefore, that can be grasped even if the representation it refers to can't be spelled out. In the same way, Blackburn's intention with respect to his lover is a general meta-representation and can be grasped

even if the object-representation, owing to the reflexivity, can't be spelled out.

It seems that what I call 'general meta-representation' is what Sperber & Wilson call 'a representation that contains a definite reference to a representation'; and that what I call a singular meta-representation is, for them, a representation that contains a 'mention' (i.e. display) of a representation. In this interpretation, and assuming that what we are talking of are mental meta-representations, (S) says that, in some cases, a general meta-representation can't be grasped if the representation it refers to can't be spelled out. This seems to me to be false: I think that grasping a general meta-representation *never* involves being able to spell out the representation referred to. By contrast, grasping a singular meta-representation always involves spelling out the representation referred to; or, rather: entertaining a singular meta-representation involves entertaining the representation referred to; so if the latter cannot be grasped because it is infinite, the meta-representation cannot be grasped either.

If I am right, it is only *qua* singular meta-representation that a reflexive intention would be impossible to grasp. What the proponent of reflexive communicative intentions has to say, therefore, in reply to Sperber & Wilson, is that the relevant reflexive intentions are *general* meta-representations, as in Blackburn's example. They do not incorporate the representation they refer to, but incorporate a concept under which the object-representation falls.

The problem is that this suggestion is very hard to implement. 'Suppose a bunch of intentions', Blackburn says (p.116), where 'we include (...) the intention that all intentions be recognized'. This reflexive intention would indeed be a general meta-representation, like Blackburn's intention with respect to his lover. But in the present case it is unclear how the domain of quantification should be defined. 'All intentions' presumably means 'All intentions in the bunch'; but then, the meta-representation will include a reference to 'the bunch' of intentions which contains the (reflexive) meta-representation itself. So it must be possible to characterize the bunch of intentions in a purely general way. Blackburn, unfortunately, does not tell us how to do it. He does not provide us with a concept such that, if an intention falls under that concept, it belongs to the bunch.

Some would say that the relevant reflexive intention is not the intention that 'all' intentions in some bunch be recognized, but rather the intention that 'this very intention' be recognized. (Or, maybe, the intention that all intentions in some bunch, including this very intention, be recognized.) Such a reflexive intention, they would add, is not a singular meta-representation since it refers to the object-representation but does not display it. So, whether or not it is a straightforward general meta-representation, it raises no problem, since the problems arise only when a singular meta-representation is reflexive.

This move rests on a mistake. 'The intention that this very intention be recognized' is neither a singular nor a general meta-representation, because it is not a *mental* representation. It is just a form of words, a linguistic

representation. In so far as it involves a demonstrative, this form of words can be understood, and corresponds to a genuine mental representation, only if the intention referred to by means of the demonstrative phrase 'this very intention' can be identified. Depending on how it is identified, the mental representation, if any, that corresponds to this form of words will be general or singular. Now it can't be singular, because the intention referred to can't be spelled out. So it has to be general, and this means that, unless the form of words is vacuous, the intention referred to by means of the demonstrative phrase must be identified as falling under some concept. But which concept? We are back to the same problem again, and it is not obvious that a solution to this problem can be found.

Reflexive intentions, then, raise a serious problem. Fortunately, reflexivity is not needed to insure overtness, and there is another way of disposing of the Strawsonian type of counter-examples. Given the *prima facie* case against reflexive intentions, this other way should be preferred.

13. Default Reflexivity

Grice himself shares Sperber's and Wilson's scepticism with respect to reflexive intentions. He says that 'a situation in which S has an intention which is infinitely expanded in this kind of way, cannot actually exist' (Grice 1982, p.240). But, interestingly enough, he adds that such a situation still has a role to play in our theory: although logically (or, rather, psychologically) impossible, it is something like an 'ideal limit'. For a case to count as one of overt communication, Grice says (1982, p. 241-42), it should only 'approach' or 'approximate' to this ideal limit.

I think Grice is basically right, and following his suggestion, as well as another suggestion he made in an earlier paper (Grice 1969, p.159; see also Bennett 1973, pp.126-7), I want to introduce the notion of *default reflexivity*. First, we have reflexivity:

- (R) An intention that p is reflexive (is a reflexive intention that p) if it includes not only the intention that p but also a sub-intention that the global intention (including both the intention that p and this sub-intention) be recognized.

Let's grant that such a reflexive intention is psychologically impossible. What will count as an approximation to such an impossible reflexive intention? Surely not the fact that S has a *great number* out of the infinity of intentions that a genuinely reflexive intention would entail. Let's suppose S has an intention of the (G2a) type, the intention that this intention be recognized, the intention that this further intention be recognized, and so on, up to the intention *n* that intention *n-1* be recognized. However great *n* is, the situation will not count as a one of overt communication if S deceptively intends intention *n* not to be recognized. What matters, as Grice (1969, p.159) pointed out, is not so much the presence of a great number of intentions that the previous intention be recognized, but rather

the absence of what Grice calls a 'sneaky' intention. When the speaker has no intention to hide any of his relevant intentions from the hearer, the situation approaches to the ideal limit of full reflexivity. I will say that, in such a situation, the speaker's intention is *default reflexive*:

- (DR) S's intention is default reflexive if and only if S has no intention inconsistent with any of the (infinite number of) intentions that his intention would entail if it were genuinely reflexive.

Default reflexivity is not an intrinsic property of intentions conceived of as mental states. It is a relational property, a function of the relations between the intention which is said to be default reflexive and the other intentions of the speaker. When we say that communicative intentions are default reflexive, we do not ascribe to the communicator any bizarre, psychologically dubious intention; we say that he does not have a certain type of intention. So default reflexivity does not raise the same objections as reflexivity.¹³

Default reflexivity is intended to capture the intuitive notion of overt-ness. It may be that this account of overt-ness will prove ultimately unsatisfactory, in the face of some new counter-examples;¹⁴ but those counter-examples, it seems to me, would also be counter-examples to the account using full reflexivity. The important point in this connection is that whatever reflexivity can do default reflexivity can do also. Reflexivity, thus, is not needed: the claim that communicative intentions are reflexive is not only dubious, it is unnecessarily strong.

¹³ Default reflexivity does not raise the same *psychological* objections as reflexivity, but for those who think that reflexive intentions are objectionable on *logical* grounds, the notion of a default reflexive intention is no better off than that of a reflexive intention, since it is defined in terms of the latter. It is, however, possible to define default reflexivity without using the notion of a reflexive intention. I suggest the following: S's intention *i* is default reflexive iff S has no intention inconsistent with any intention belonging to the DR-set with respect to this intention *i*. The DR-set with respect to an intention *i* – 'DR *i*', for short – is defined by (a) and (b):

- (a) *i* belongs to DR *i*;
 (b) For any intention belonging to DR *i*, the intention that this intention be recognized also belongs to DR *i*.

¹⁴ Grice's early suggestion (Grice 1969, p.159), of which the default reflexivity account is an offspring, has been criticized and counter-exemplified by Stephen Schiffer (1972, p.26). Schiffer's criticisms, however, are directed towards Grice's *specific* proposal, which rests on the idea that the primary intention is necessarily intended to be fulfilled *via* its recognition. This idea is absent from my own account, and I think this is sufficient to protect it against Schiffer's counter-example (even though Schiffer thinks 'that no condition requiring S not to have certain intentions will adequately deal with the problems raised by (his) counter-examples' (*Ibid.*)).

There are, however, counter-examples to the account of overt-ness I've just put forward. They will be discussed, and the account accordingly improved upon, in section 15 below.

14. *The Communicative Intention and the Intention to Communicate*

Before leaving the issue, I want to mention an argument that might be invoked in favor of (D2) and the reflexivity of communicative intentions. I said from the outset that the communicative intention is an intention which the communicator must have, or at least which her utterance must make manifest. Remember principle (P*):

(P*) It is not possible to communicate without having, or making manifest that one has, the communicative intention.

(P*), used as a constraint on communicative intentions, made it possible to distinguish the communicative intention, which conforms to (P*), from the perlocutionary intention, which does not and thus cannot even be included as a sub-intention within the communicative intention. Contrary to the perlocutionary intention, the communicative intention is intrinsic to the communicative act and cannot be divorced from it.

The main justification for (P*) is this. A communicative act is a piece of behaviour like any other; what marks it out *as* a communicative act is only a certain *intention* (the 'communicative intention') which the communicator is supposed to have when producing this piece of behaviour. It follows that a piece of behaviour that does not manifest an underlying communicative intention is not a communicative act; hence (P*).

Now what, intuitively, can the communicative intention be? The first answer that comes to mind is: The communicative intention is nothing other than the intention to communicate. This answer neatly explains why the communicative intention is so closely tied to the communicative act. Of course, this answer is not satisfactory as it stands, being plainly circular: we define a communicative act as an utterance act that makes manifest an underlying communicative intention, and we define a communicative intention as an intention to perform a communicative act. But this answer is not wholly vacuous; it enables us to set up a constraint on communicative intentions, viz. constraint (Q):

(Q) The communicative intention is fulfilled if and only if the communicative act is (successfully?) performed.

This is what equating the communicative intention with the intention to communicate amounts to, and it does not prevent us from seeking a substantial definition of the communicative intention, construed as an intention such that the two following constraints hold: (P*) the communicator cannot perform a communicative act without having, or making manifest that he has, this intention, and (Q) this intention is fulfilled if and only if the communicative act is (successfully) performed.

What, then, can such an intention be? It is easy to show that an intention conforming both to (P*) and to (Q) must be reflexive. Suppose we identify

the communicative intention in a certain way – for example as intention (G2a). Having that intention is obviously not enough for S to communicate; S must make this intention manifest to A by means of his utterance *u* (and A must recognize this intention if the communicative act is to be successful). Since this is a necessary condition of communication, and since the communicative intention is an intention to communicate, the communicative intention must include as a sub-intention the intention that this condition be satisfied, i.e. the intention that *u* make (G2a) manifest to the audience (and, maybe, the intention that A recognize (G2a)). So the communicative intention cannot be identified with (G2a) after all: it must also include the new sub-intention. But remember: to communicate one has to make manifest the communicative intention. It follows that the new sub-intention also must be made manifest for the utterance to be a communicative act. So there is a new condition that must be satisfied for communication to take place: *u* must make the new sub-intention manifest to A. By the same reasoning, this new condition that must be satisfied for communication to take place yields a new sub-intention to include in the communicative intention, and so on indefinitely. The only way for this to get stabilized is to allow the communicative intention to be reflexive, as in (D2).

This argument in favor of the reflexivity of communicative intentions is not good. It begs the whole question. If we admit that the intention which a communicator necessarily makes manifest when he communicates is the intention to communicate, and thus conforms not only to (P*) but also to (Q), then, of course, the communicative intention has to be reflexive. SNGC, precisely, says that the communicative intention, i.e. the intention by means of which communicative behaviour is marked out as communicative, is nothing other than the intention to communicate; to communicate, according to SNGC, is to make manifest an intention to communicate. But I see no reason to accept this claim. Once we notice that it leads us into an infinite regress, we have two solutions: either we accept reflexivity, or we drop the claim. Dropping the claim is costless; it only means abandoning (Q)¹⁵ and distinguishing the conditions that are necessary and sufficient for communication (and whose satisfaction is necessary

¹⁵ Note that, if one insists on keeping (Q) as a constraint on communicative intentions, this is possible without being committed to SNGC and the reflexivity of communicative intentions; what one has to do, in that case, is to abandon (P*). This is just a matter of definition: either we define 'communicative intention' by (P*), or we define it by (Q). Either we say that the communicative intention is the intention which marks out a certain behaviour as communicative – the intention which the communicator must make manifest for his behaviour to count as communicative – or we say that the communicative intention is the intention to communicate. If we choose the latter course, we must abandon (P*) (unless, of course, we accept SNGC); we must say that a communicative act does not necessarily make manifest a communicative intention (construed as 'intention to communicate'). This is Sperber & Wilson's position.

It is important to understand that the two positions I have just described are not in conflict. (P*)-based communicative intentions and (Q)-based communicative

and sufficient for the fulfilment of the 'intention to communicate') from the conditions that are necessary and sufficient for the fulfilment of the communicative intention.

The distinction between the two sorts of conditions allows us to concede that hearer's recognition of the speaker's communicative intention is a necessary condition of successful communication, while insisting that it is not a necessary condition for fulfilling the communicative intention. In other words, the communicative intention need not include a (reflexive) sub-intention that the communicative intention be recognized, even if recognition of the communicative intention is indeed necessary to successful communication. To communicate, in this framework, is to make manifest to the audience one's communicative intention, and communication succeeds when the hearer recognizes the speaker's communicative intention; but, contrary to SNGC, this intention does not have to be made manifest, let alone recognized, in order to be fulfilled. This seems to be paradoxical, but it is not, because the speaker's communicative intention is *not* an intention to communicate (it is, as we shall see, *slightly less* than an intention to communicate); it is, nevertheless, legitimately called the communicative intention, because it is the intention which marks out the communicative act as such – the intention that the communicative act makes manifest.

15. Overtress Again

It is still unclear, at this point, what exactly the communicative intention is. We assume that it does not include a reflexive sub-intention such as (G2b*), but does it include (G2b)? We thought that it had to, since communicative intentions are 'overt', intended to be recognized. But we saw, after Strawson, that (G2b) is not enough to warrant overtress. This is why (G2b*) was put forward. Instead of (G2b*), I suggested, after Grice, that we account for overtress by means of what I called default reflexivity. But then, do we still need intention (G2b), or can we identify the communicative intention with intention (G2a) *qua* default reflexive?

Suppose that we drop (G2b) and equate the communicative intention with the open (default reflexive) intention that *u* give A reason to believe PC. This intention is fulfilled if and only if *u* gives A reason to believe PC, whether or not A recognizes S's intention to provide such reason.

intentions are two different sorts of intentions which one has to distinguish however one wishes to use the phrase 'communicative intention'. I, personally, use 'communicative intention' for (P*)-based communicative intentions only; (Q)-based communicative intentions I call 'intentions to communicate'. Sperber & Wilson adopt a different terminology, calling 'communicative intention' the intention to communicate. Whatever course one chooses to follow, to communicate is to make a (P*)-based communicative intention manifest, and the intention to communicate, i.e. the (Q)-based communicative intention, is easy to define as the intention to make manifest a (P*)-based communicative intention.

What I said in the last section is therefore true: hearer's recognition is necessary for communication to succeed, but not for the communicative intention to be fulfilled.

I take it, however, that we still need intention (G2b). Suppose S intends by an utterance *u* to give A reason to believe PC, and this intention – (G2a) – is open in the sense of being default reflexive. S's intention being default reflexive implies that she does not mind if A recognizes her intention to give A reason to believe PC. Suppose that S does not specifically intend A to recognize her intention: she just does not mind. Suppose, also, that A realizes that this is so: he recognizes S's intention and recognizes that, although S does not mind if he recognizes it, she does not specifically intend him to recognize it either. Is this case a case of communication? I do not think so. It seems to me that for communication to take place it is not enough that S make manifest, and that A recognize, an open intention to give A reason to believe PC; she must also intend, and make manifest that she intends, A to recognize this open intention. In other words, the communicative intention is as stated in (D1), plus default reflexivity:

(D1*) communicative intention	}	open (= default reflexive) sub-intention (a) that <i>u</i> give A reason to believe PC sub-intention (b) that A recognize the open inten- tion (a)
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Adding to the open intention (a) the intention that this intention be recognized allows us to dispose of another counter-example, put forward by Stephen Schiffer (at the Cargèse conference on communication, where this paper was read). Schiffer pointed out that the speaker may well have a default reflexive intention that *p*, and thus no intention inconsistent with the reflexive intention that *p*, while still intending A to believe (falsely) that she has such an intention. In this predicament, S's intention that *p* is not wholly overt, according to Schiffer, even though it is default reflexive. Default reflexivity prevents S from having what we might call 'first order' deceptive intentions (i.e. intentions inconsistent with the reflexive intention that *p*), but not from having a second order deceptive intention that A believe that S has a first order deceptive intention. A moment of reflection shows, however, that second order deceptive intentions of this type are no longer possible once we add intention (b) that A recognize the speaker's open intention, and recognize it as open (i.e. default reflexive).

An obvious objection to (D1*) is that it is possible, and indeed easy, to construct on the same pattern a further counter-example based on the speaker's having a third order deceptive intention, i.e. an intention such as (i):

- (i) (S's intention) that A believe (falsely) that S intends A to believe that S has an intention inconsistent with the reflexive intention that *p*.

Presumably, if S has a deceptive intention like (i), her intention that p is not 'wholly overt'. This seems to ruin our efforts to account for overtness by means of default reflexivity; it seems that we are no better off, no less exposed to the Strawsonian type of counter-examples, with (D1*) and the default reflexive analysis than we were with Grice's original account.

The default reflexive analysis, however, can be rescued at a very small cost. Let me introduce another intention, (j):

- (j) (S's intention) that A recognize that S intends A to recognize as open S's intention that p.

About (j), we notice, first, that it is inconsistent with (i), and second, that (b) would imply (j) if (b) were reflexive in the sense of (R). (I leave it as an exercise to the reader to check that these two points are correct.) So what has to be done, to avoid the counter-example to (D1*) (assuming, as I do, that it is a counter-example), is just to require that intention (b) be default reflexive, like intention (a); for if (b) is default reflexive, it is no longer possible for S to have intention (i), since (i) is inconsistent with an intention, (j), that (b) would imply if it were reflexive.

To make (b) default reflexive, like (a), we just have to ascribe default reflexivity to the communicative intention itself:

- (D1**)
communicative intention = open (default reflexive) intention that
(a) *u* give A reason to believe PC, and
(b) A recognize intention (a), and recognize it as open

This, then, is my definition of the (P*-based) communicative intention. A communicative act is performed by means of an utterance *u* if and only if *u* makes such a complex intention manifest; and communication succeeds when this intention is actually recognized by the hearer. (Which communicative act is performed depends on how the variable 'PC' is instantiated.) Hearer's recognition of the communicative intention is thus necessary for successful communication, but again, it is not necessary for the communicative intention itself to be fulfilled. The communicative intention is fulfilled if and only if: *u* gives A reason to believe PC and A recognizes S's open intention that it be so. For the communicative intention to be fulfilled, A must recognize S's open intention (a), but he need not recognize S's whole (open) communicative intention, of which (b) is also a part. Recognition of S's whole communicative intention, including (b), is needed only for communication to succeed.

16. Conclusion

In this paper I have tried to define the communicative intention, i.e. the intention such that a piece of behaviour (an 'utterance') *u* is a communicative act if and only if it makes an intention of this type manifest. My definition is stated in (D1**) above. The communicative intention thus

defined is complex and includes, as in Grice's account, a primary intention plus the intention that this intention be recognized.

There are two main differences between my account and that of Grice. First, I defined the primary intention not as an intention to produce in the audience a certain response, but as an intention to provide the audience with 'reason to believe' that certain conditions obtain. These conditions are the 'prototypicality conditions' of the communicative act, and sometimes they include the possession by the speaker of an intention to produce in the audience a certain response. Second, I rejected, after many others, Grice's idea that the fulfilment of this primary intention is (always) intended to depend on its recognition, i.e. the idea that the communicative intention includes not only the primary intention and the intention that it be recognized, but also the intention that the fulfilment of the primary intention somehow depend on its recognition. However, I defined the notion of 'reason to believe' in such a way that recognition of the primary intention is indeed *sufficient* for its fulfilment.

My aim in this paper was not only to amend Grice's original account, but also to consider what I called the Neo-Gricean Claim, according to which recognition of the communicative intention itself is sufficient and/or necessary for its fulfilment. In its stronger, more interesting version, the Neo-Gricean Claim, advocated by such important authors as Searle (1969) and Bach & Harnish (1979), says that to communicate is to express a communicative intention, which intention is fulfilled if and only if it is recognized by the hearer.

From the fact that the primary intention is fulfilled if it is recognized, it follows that the communicative intention also is fulfilled if it is recognized. This is quite easy to demonstrate: when the communicative intention is recognized, the primary intention (a), which is a part of the communicative intention, is also recognized, and thus fulfilled. Besides the primary intention (a), the communicative intention contains nothing other than a second intention (b) that the primary intention (a) be recognized. But this second intention is trivially fulfilled when the primary intention (a) is recognized.¹⁶ So the recognition of the communicative intention implies the recognition of the primary intention (a), and the recognition of (a) implies the fulfilment of the two sub-intentions that jointly constitute the communicative intention. This confirms the weaker version of the Neo-Gricean Claim, according to which the recognition of the communicative intention is a sufficient condition of its fulfilment.

What about the stronger version, SNGC, according to which the recognition of the communicative intention is necessary and sufficient for its fulfilment? SNGC entails the (problematical) thesis that communicative

¹⁶ More precisely, the second intention (b) is that the primary intention (a) be recognized *as open*. This raises no problem: intention (a) is indeed recognized as open when the communicative intention is recognized, because the communicative intention is an open intention consisting of the two sub-intentions (a) and (b), and this is equivalent to a global intention consisting of two open sub-intentions.

intentions are reflexive and include a sub-intention that they *themselves* be recognized. There are two possible justifications for this thesis. (1) It is sometimes said that it is needed to account for the essential overtness of communicative intentions. But, following a suggestion of Grice, I pointed out that the overtness of communicative intentions can be accounted for by assuming that communicative intentions have the relational property of 'default reflexivity'. (2) It can also be said that, if the communicative intention, i.e. the intention which a communicative act necessarily makes manifest, is nothing other than the intention to communicate, then it has to be reflexive. But, as I tried to make clear, there is no reason to assume that the communicative intention is nothing other than the intention to communicate. Assuming that would be to accept SNGC, and thus to beg the question.

None of these considerations constitute a knock-down argument against SNGC. All I have done in this paper is to show (i) that SNGC rests on the reflexivity thesis, which raises problems of its own, and (ii) that the arguments given in favor of this thesis – and, therefore, in favor of SNGC – are not compelling. This is no knock down argument, but it is enough, I think, to shift the burden of proof to the proponents of SNGC.¹⁷

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