

## IN DEFENSE OF INDIRECT COMMUNICATION

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### 1. Locke, Grice, Lepore & Stone

Here is a simple and compelling view about how linguistic communication works. Suppose I have a thought and I'd like to share it with you. First, I encode it as a sentence of a language I assume we both speak, and then I utter this sentence when I think I have your attention. Upon hearing me, you first identify the sentence uttered, and then you use the reverse of my encoding to recover the thought I had. Let's call this the *Lockean model of linguistic communication*.<sup>1</sup>

There are two striking features of this picture. The first is that it is fully compatible with the idea that linguistic communication is entirely conventional. While the model does not rule out that interpretation relies on extensive background knowledge or keen sensitivity to the context, all it explicitly demands is that the participants should be competent speakers of the language used. The second striking feature of the model is that it places the indirectness characteristic of much of our ordinary conversation outside the scope of linguistic communication proper. There are many reasonable inferences a hearer might draw from the fact that the speaker uttered a particular sentence, but communicative success does not require drawing any one of them. It is simply a matter of encoding and decoding.

Both of these features of the Lockean model – emphasis on linguistic convention and restriction of interpretative reasoning – are salutary. The most perplexing fact about linguistic communication is how well it works. Despite our differences we seem to be

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<sup>1</sup> “To make words serviceable to the end of communication, it is necessary [...] that they excite in the hearer exactly the same idea they stand for in the mind of the speaker. Without this, men fill one another's heads with noise and sounds; but convey not thereby their thoughts, and lay not before one another their ideas, which is the end of discourse and language.” *Essay* 3.9.4.

able to convey to each other more than enough for our complex practical and theoretical purposes. Moreover, we do this relatively quickly and effortlessly, even when we converse about novel subjects with people we don't know. The simpler the tasks our model ascribes to us the less mysterious our achievement will be. Some people are good at reading a speaker's mind by dissecting her words, scrutinizing her gestures, or analyzing her tone of voice, but while this may give them a leg up in negotiation or persuasion, such sophisticated and unevenly distributed skills are not essential for linguistic communication.

In *Logic and Conversation*, Paul Grice has launched an extended critique of the Lockean model.<sup>2</sup> Being privy to linguistic conventions, he maintains, is not enough for communication – speakers and hearers must also engage in a pattern of reasoning that has nothing to do with language *per se*. This machinery is the source of much indirect information we get across in conversation. By complicating pragmatics Grice was in a position to simplify semantics and argue that, appearances notwithstanding, natural languages are much like the simple formal languages in logic.

Grice's central point is that communication requires that the hearer should figure out what the speaker *meant*, but decoding the sentence used gives her at best something in the vicinity of what the speaker *said*.<sup>3</sup> The gap must be filled by reasoning. Grice's contention is that the reasoning in question rests on the presumption of the speaker's cooperativeness and rationality. What is *conversationally implicated* is supposed to be calculable on the basis of what the speaker said, the assumption that he acted to further the goals of conversation, and the expectation that he did so by reasonable means. Grice makes the first constraint explicit as the *Cooperative Principle*, and elaborates the second by his *Maxims of Quality, Quantity, Relation, and Manner*. Understanding conversational implicatures is not a matter of knowing linguistic conventions, and yet, such an

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<sup>2</sup> Grice (1967).

<sup>3</sup> If the sentence contains indexicals, it encodes in some way less than what the speaker says in uttering it; if the sentence triggers conventional implicatures, it encodes in some way more. But orthodox Griceans typically assume that indexicality and conventional implicature are tightly constrained features of natural languages, linked to a handful of lexical items. Accordingly, what speakers say by uttering a sentence tends to stay close to its conventional meaning. For discussion, see Bach, (2001).

understanding is indispensable for communication. If the phenomenon is real and widespread, as Grice argues it is, the Lockean model is massively inadequate.

When Ernest Lepore and Matthew Stone argue against the existence of conversational implicatures in their book, *Imagination and Convention*,<sup>4</sup> they are not merely trying to take down one of the most influential theories in contemporary philosophy of language.<sup>5</sup> In the past decades there have been many proposals to amend, revise, or overhaul the system of Gricean maxims, or even to redraw the contours of Grice's model of linguistic communication. But none of the proposals elaborated in Robert Stalnaker (1973, 1979), Kent Bach and Robert Harnish (1979), Laurence Horn (1984), Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson (1986), Richmond Thomason (1990), Stephen Neale (1992), Jerrold Levinson (2000), Robyn Carston (2002), or François Recanati (2004, 2010) have suggested that we should abandon Grice's fundamental insight and return to the simpler Lockean model. Contemporary philosophy of language simply takes it for granted that linguistic communication conveys more than what is linguistically encoded. Lepore and Stone don't.<sup>6</sup> This is what makes their book interesting and important.

## 2. Divide and conquer

Consider what Grice took to be a straightforward case of conversational implicature: me uttering the sentence 'I tried to call last night.' Upon hearing my words you undoubtedly take it for granted that I faced some difficulty and ended up not making the call – perhaps

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<sup>4</sup> Lepore and Stone (2015).

<sup>5</sup> That Lepore cannot go along with everything in the Gricean picture was clear before he started this project. He is – or at least was, at the time he co-authored Cappelen and Lepore (2005) – a speech-act pluralist, that is, someone who thinks utterances of sentences express indefinitely many propositions, most of which are irrelevant in the particular context in which the utterance is reported. This means that there is no stable notion of what the speaker said that could be employed in deriving conversational implicatures. However, Lepore is (or at least was) also a semantic minimalist, that is, someone who believes that the semantic content of a contextually insensitive sentence is a proposition expressed by every utterance of that sentence. A speech-act pluralist who is also a semantic minimalist could allow Gricean derivations which start from the semantic content, rather than what the speaker said. The Lepore of 2005 could have still accepted the bulk of the Gricean project.

<sup>6</sup> There is a way in which the Lockean model unquestionably is inadequate. It deals exclusively with the communication of *content* but communicative success surely requires conveying the *force* of the utterance as well. In uttering the sentences 'I will buy you a box of chocolates' the speaker may simply make an assertion, or she may (perhaps in addition to the assertion) make a promise. For successful communication to take place, the hearer must surely figure out which of these is the case. Lepore and Stone allow that there are linguistic conventions of mood that encode the force with which a sentence can be literally used. Thus, to a limited extent, they move beyond the Lockean model.

I chickened out, perhaps I lost my phone, perhaps I had no reception, perhaps something else intervened. For Grice, this suggestion<sup>7</sup> is a conversational implicature. You can reason your way to it as follows. I said that I *tried* to call, rather than that I *did* call. Had I made the call, given my presumed commitment to cooperativity, I should have said so because it would not have taken more effort and it would have been more informative. So, presumably, I did not call. Moreover, if I tried but failed then most likely there was some difficulty that got in the way. And since I am aware that you can see through all this, I plausibly want you to reason along these lines, and so, I must mean to convey to you that I faced some difficulty and ended up not making the call. Grice does not claim that this is *actually* how you work out what I am suggesting. He took his theory as a rational reconstruction of your interpretative process. What he means by that is a matter of disagreement – perhaps he thinks this is how an idealized interpreter would reason in your position, perhaps he thinks this is the justification you would fall back to if pressed by an interlocutor.

A defender of the Lockean model can resist Grice in two ways. One option is to cut off the reasoning right at the beginning and maintain that in uttering ‘I *tried* to call last night’ I did say that I did not call. I put stress on the word ‘tried’ and the resulting pattern of intonation marks what linguists sometimes call *contrastive focus*. If you ask me whether I ate the cookies and I answer that I ate *some* I have thereby denied your charge. Similarly, if you ask whether I called and I answer that I *tried* I have thereby told you that I did not.

The other option is to go along with the Gricean derivation to the end and reject only the last step. I did suggest that I failed to call due to some difficulty but – while I perhaps foresaw that you might pick up on this, and perhaps I even hoped that you would – I did not have the right kind of reflexive intention towards this content. I did not mean that I failed to make the call. Or perhaps I did mean that but my communicative success is not tied to your recognition of this aspect of speaker meaning. We would be communicating just fine had you simply registered that I tried to call and then refrained from speculating whether I ended up making the call or not.

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<sup>7</sup> To avoid confusion I will avoid the terms ‘imply’ or ‘implicate’ and use ‘suggest’ instead when I try to describe a conversation without making substantial theoretical commitments.

Lepore and Stone use these two strategies to argue against a barrage of putative examples of conversational implicatures. The first strategy involves claiming that the process whereby the hearer identifies a certain content conveyed by the speaker's utterance is just *disambiguation*. The utterance of 'I tried to call last night' may or may not encode the information that I did not call, depending on how it is articulated. In context, we can usually tell whether contrastive focus is at play, and interpretation is just a matter of following the appropriate semantic rule. Out of context, we may still take the sentence as carrying this information but this is just a reflection of our expectation concerning the way in which the sentence would be typically used. It is sort of like the intuition that 'Lucy went to the bank to cash a check' entails that Lucy went to a financial institution, rather than to a river or that 'Every dog chased a cat' doesn't entail that a single cat was chased by every dog – a sense of *dominance* of one reading over another.

Lepore and Stone treat putative examples of scalar implicatures in the same vein – this is how they explain, for example, why the sentence 'It looked red' carries normally the suggestion that the item in question wasn't red. (129–31) They also argue that there is no need to appeal to a Maxim of Manner to explain why simple narration tends to carry the suggestion that the order of clauses corresponds to the order of events described.

Assuming, as it is independently plausible, that the logical form of tensed sentences contains time variables, interpretation requires that we settle their values. We have ample evidence that this process is guided by linguistic conventions specifically tied to the tense system of the language. (119–23) Finally, Lepore and Stone make a compelling case that sentences like 'Can you pass me the salt?' are lexically ambiguous. 'Are you able to pass the salt?' or 'Is it possible for you to pass the salt?' come very close in meaning to this sentence but they cannot be used to make a request, which shows that the request interpretation is not detachable. The best explanation appears to be that there are distinct linguistic conventions associated with the modal auxiliary 'can' and one of these carries imperative mood marking. (99–106) As always, hearers must disambiguate in order to interpret.

The second strategy for arguing against conversational implicatures is to deny that the process whereby the hearer extracts some information from the speaker's utterance is

rule-governed. This is the path Lepore and Stone would follow when it comes to the suggestion carried by the sentence ‘I tried to call last night’ that the speaker met with some difficulties. Disambiguation gets us to the information that the speaker failed to call – further reasoning about the causes of the failure is optional. The hearer is likely to envision some obstacle responsible for the failure but there is no need to find the specific one the speaker may have had in mind. Suspecting that the obstacle was the speaker’s reluctance or a technical glitch is equally permissible – concluding either of these is equally unjustified. Moreover, communicative success does not require that the hearer grasp something all the permissible causes of failure have in common.

Lepore and Stone treat figurative and evocative speech in this way. They take metaphor, sarcasm, irony, and humor to be different conversational practices (language games) with their own rules and with no single theory covering them all. What they have in common is only that none of them are instances of communication, of hearers recovering some specific content the speaker meant. They are open-ended explorations which often rely on the free exercise of imagination and on substantial background knowledge (191–3).

Although I will question this in the next section, let’s suppose for the sake of argument that the divide and conquer strategy is successful, that is, that all putative examples of conversational implicature are shown to be cases of disambiguation or extra-communicative reasoning. Is the Lockean model then saved from Grice’s criticism? Not quite. The heart of Grice’s criticism was the claim that for linguistic communication to take place the hearer must figure out what the speaker meant, which goes significantly beyond what her words mean. Conversational implicature was supposed to be an illustration of how speaker meaning can outstrip linguistic meaning – even if the illustration fails the general point remains.

What Lepore and Stone need to complete their defense of the Lockean model is the rejection of the Gricean criterion of communicative success. When I utter the sentence ‘I tried to call last night’ you don’t need to figure out that I encountered some difficulty even if this is part of what I meant. You do need to realize that I did not call, but only because this is entailed by the sentence, as interpreted in the context. In general,

communication succeeds if the hearer learns how the speaker's words are to be taken, irrespective of what she intended to convey.

There is a concession hidden inside the defiant rejection of the Gricean view. Lepore and Stone never deny that to disambiguate the hearer must rely on reasoning about what the speaker has in mind. To figure out that in uttering 'Flying planes can be dangerous' the speaker uttered a sentence which means that it can be dangerous to fly planes and not that planes that fly can be dangerous the hearer has to find out which of these was the speaker's *intended reading*. For the concession not to become a complete surrender, Lepore and Stone must maintain that disambiguation involves only a very limited sort of reasoning about speaker intentions. The idea might be that we can resolve ambiguities by blindly generating all possible readings and then use contextual clues and background knowledge just to *choose* among them. This might require much less than the full-blown Gricean apparatus.<sup>8</sup>

But even if disambiguation is cognitively manageable, I suspect many of us find the proliferation of ambiguity in Lepore and Stone's work alarming. Consider again 'Can you pass the salt?' If the reason this sentence can be used to make a request is an ambiguity in 'can' we can understand why 'Are you able to pass the salt?' cannot be so used but it becomes a mystery why 'Would you mind passing the salt?' can. We will have to find some other source of ambiguity in the latter sentence.

Kripke has famously said that positing ambiguities is the lazy person's approach to philosophy and there is insight behind the sneer. Once we say that a certain expression is ambiguous, we have given up the hope of systematic theorizing about the relation between its meanings. Consider numerals. To explain away *all* scalar implicatures via positing ambiguities, as Lepore and Stone suggest we should, they will have to say that these are systematically ambiguous between an 'at least' and an 'exactly' interpretation without any hope to explain why they never get an 'at most' reading. For them, it's just a

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<sup>8</sup> Arguably, the hearer must also engage in reasoning about speaker intentions when determining the referent of certain indexical expressions. To limit the scope of reasoning, a defender of the Lockean model would also insist that there are only a few indexical expressions and their interpretation is largely independent of speaker intention. This is this is one of the central theses of Cappelen and Lepore (2005).

brute lexical fact that ‘John has three children’ cannot have a reading that is true if John has four children. Griceans do better here: they can say that the numerals have only the ‘at least’ reading, that the ‘exactly’ implication arises as a result of a perfectly general strengthening mechanism, and that no analogous mechanism is available for obtaining an ‘at most’ interpretation because that would require retracting an entailment. Lepore and Stone legitimately criticize Gricean explanations as imprecise. But we should be reluctant to abandon loose explanations in favor of no explanation.

### **3. Core examples, non-linguistic conventions, and epistemic asymmetry**

Even if we are willing to swallow the loss of explanatory power that goes along with multiplying senses there remain significant questions about the tenability of the Lockean model. I will focus on three interrelated issues: core examples of conversational implicature, the distinction between linguistic and non-linguistic conventions, and the epistemic asymmetry between the roles of the speaker and the hearer.

I think Parts 2 and 3 of *Imagination and Convention* conclusively show that the Gricean program has overreached – it underestimated the scope of linguistic conventions and overestimated the reaches of communicative intentions. Many of the standard examples of conversational implicatures are something else. Nonetheless, I suspect that Grice’s central examples – the ones non-specialists immediately think of when they hear the term “conversational implicature” – can withstand scrutiny.

Take the case of the letter of recommendation.<sup>9</sup> There is no chance that when Grice’s imagined professor writes “Dear Sir, Mr. X’s command of English is excellent, and his attendance at tutorials has been regular. Yours, etc.” the suggestion that the candidate is no good at philosophy is linguistically encoded. Paying attention to the subtleties of syntactic form, presuppositions, information structure, or the meanings of specific lexical items does not change this judgment. And it would be hard to deny that the letter writer has a reflexive intention that her reader should identify the suggestion as a result of entertaining the content of the sentence, noticing the flagrant violation of the relevance

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<sup>9</sup> Grice, (1967): 33.

requirement, and presuming that the speaker is nonetheless adheres to rational cooperation. Conveying that the candidate is no good at philosophy is the *sole point* of such an utterance – if the hearer does not get that there seems to be no good reason for saying that there was successful communication.

One might suggest that there is a certain slack in what is conveyed here – perhaps we should count the communication as successful if the reader takes the letter writer to have suggested not that the candidate is no good at philosophy, but, say, that the letter writer believes that he is no good at philosophy, or that he does not meet the standards of the program he is applying to, or simply that he should not be admitted. These are different propositions – isn't the fact that the reader does not have to select one among these interpretative options evidence against the Gricean view? I don't think so. Of course, we have to concede that Grice's talk of *the* proposition meant in uttering a sentence is an idealization. The letter writer meant *all* the propositions mentioned above, and many more. The evidence for this straightforward – if one asked the writer whether he meant any of these things he would say yes. And when the reader understands the letter she understands that the writer meant all these things. There is no unique endpoint to Gricean reasoning – when we derive a proposition we can keep on deriving more and more closely related ones.

The case of the gas station is similar.<sup>10</sup> The sentence “There is a garage round the corner” in Grice's example does not encode the information that the garage is open. The contrast with ‘I tried to call last night’ is instructive. There we saw sensitivity to intonation; here we have no such thing. When I say that I tried to call and then I fall silent, normally you have a sense that I left things hanging and that I should follow my remark with a ‘but...’. There is nothing like that when I say that there is a garage round the corner. Here too, it would be hard to deny that in making the utterance the speaker in some sense committed himself to the garage being open (and that it has gas, and that it would sell it, and that it would accept regular methods of payment, and ...) If the driver followed up by the question ‘Is it open?’ (or ‘Does it have gas?’, or ‘Would they be willing to sell gas?’, or ‘Would they be willing to sell gas for regular forms of payment?’) it would be fine for the

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<sup>10</sup> Grice, (1967): 32.

speaker to say ‘I am not sure’ but if he said ‘I don’t think so’ he would call the *sincerity* of his first utterance into question.<sup>11</sup>

These two cases aren’t just *recherché* examples. To defend the Lockean model they would have to be explained away and it is not clear to me that they can. They show, I think, that the phenomenon of conversational implicature is real, even if its scope is more restricted than Grice and his followers believed.

Let’s try to move beyond intuitions and ask *why* these cases seem to resist analysis in terms of disambiguation and creative interpretation. I start with the former. One of the central insights of Lepore and Stone’s book is that conventions are ubiquitous. They are the means whereby we achieve coordination. Sometimes people act in predictably similar ways because given their biological endowment, their upbringing, their circumstances, they cannot easily do anything but what they in fact do. But besides instinctive responses, near-automatic habits, or externally enforced behavior, such uniformity would be a surprise. Moreover, uniformity due to instinct, habit, or pressure does not exhibit the sort of interdependence characteristic of coordination in communication – they are not cases when one would readily switch one’s behavior if everyone else did. As Lepore and Stone put it, “[i]f we find a coordination problem that people reliably solve, then we have good reason to think that they solve it through some kind of convention, and not through general mechanisms grounded in abstract functional considerations.” (96) I agree. But I don’t think we have reason to think that the convention in question is a *linguistic* one.

Consider again the case of the letter of recommendation. The fact that the letter writer can expect her reader to pick up on his suggestion has much to do with the fact that it is common ground between them that the purpose of the letter is to answer a particular question: ‘Is the candidate qualified for the job?’ It also helps if it is part of the common ground that blunt negative assessments are socially inappropriate, that one usually writes more than a couple of sentences, that mentioning the candidate’s linguistic competence and reliable attendance are not obligatory, that it is unusual and sometimes even illegal to

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<sup>11</sup> Note that I am not saying that the speaker would *assert* these things just by uttering “There is a garage round the corner.” Implicature is not subject to the same norms as assertion.

follow up recommendation letters by a phone call, and much else. Such expectations are not consequences of cooperativity or rationality – they are features of the highly idiosyncratic convention of academic letters of recommendations. This is a convention we exercise *through* our use of language but it is not a convention *of* language.

There are non-linguistic conventions at play in the gas station example as well. Here too, it matters that the situation makes it clear that there is a tacit question the driver seeks an answer to: ‘Where can I get gas for my car?’ The assertion that there is a garage round the corner is supposed to be relevant for answering this question. But abstract principles of cooperation and rationality won’t fix *how* relevant the speaker needs to be. The existence of the garage is somewhat relevant as long as there is even a slight chance that it is open. Grice says in *Logic and Conversation* that the speaker implicates that the garage is, or at least may be open. Which of these was likely meant in a particular case is a matter of social conventions, which may vary from culture to culture, and which has likely nothing to do with language.

Granting that successful linguistic communication always relies on conventions cannot save the Lockean model. A vast amount of our knowledge is knowledge of conventions, so to say that communication requires nothing beyond knowledge of conventions does precious little to illuminate how even the least informed among us are capable of efficiently conveying their ideas by talking. The Lockean model achieves this by recognizing only two places where conventions are relied upon in communication: in linking an utterance with the sentence uttered and in linking the sentence with its content. The conventions at play in Grice’s core examples of conversational implicature belong to neither of these categories – they are not means for disambiguation.

Besides the ubiquity of conventions, another major theme of Lepore and Stone’s book is the open-endedness of a good deal of interpretation. This is a central point of their criticism of the Gricean view that metaphor, sarcasm, irony, and their ilk are instances of conversational implicature. For that view assumes that when a speaker is engaged in figurative speech she tries to convey something specific, which seems implausible. It also ignores the fact that interpretation of figurative speech requires imaginative engagement

and that hearers are expected to think through things for themselves. Lepore and Stone are perfectly correct to call the process creative interpretation. At the same time, they seem to go too far when they say that “it’s this engagement itself that the speaker is aiming for; the speaker doesn’t need the hearer to derive some further, message” from the utterance (190). Emphasizing the freedom the hearer has in making sense of a figurative or evocative utterance of the speaker they seem to ignore the fact that even in such cases the speaker can exercise considerable control over what counts as a permissible interpretation of her words, as the following dialogue attests:

- A: – All the world’s a stage.  
B: – Yeah, I hate it that people are constantly watching you.  
A: – No, that’s not what I meant. I just regret how scripted human life is.  
B: – No, the point is that people are watching you.

A’s response to B’s interpretation is entirely appropriate; B’s retort is completely out of line. B doesn’t get to override A’s take on her own words.

This highlights the third problem with Lepore and Stone’s defense of the Lockean model. If communication is a matter of getting some thought across to someone by encoding it in a linguistic form, we understand why the epistemic positions of the speaker and hearer are asymmetric.<sup>12</sup> The speaker already knows what thought he is trying to convey; the hearer is just trying to find out. If it is unclear what sentence the speaker uttered or what the sentence means it makes sense to defer to him. But if creative interpretation is beyond the scope of linguistic communication this consideration does not apply. If the hearer is invited to use her imagination and freely go beyond the literal meaning of the speaker’s sentence why exactly would she be subject to corrections coming from the speaker? Where would the speaker’s interpretative authority come from?<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Lepore and Stone acknowledge that “interlocutors coordinate on the imaginative practices by which they engage with utterance content” (161) – for them, creative interpretation is not altogether unconstrained. But they do reject the idea that coordination in creative interpretation extends to some content that is indirectly conveyed by the speaker to the hearer. This is why they have a hard time accommodating the epistemic privilege of the speaker with regard to the content of non-literal speech.

<sup>13</sup> Lepore and Stone address briefly a related problem. They note that metaphorical instructions are frequent and effective which is puzzling on their account of metaphor (171). Then they claim that the key to the phenomenon is a kind of simulation: we take the metaphorical language at face value go along with the imaginative exercise and then – as a matter of fact – end up imagining the same thing. But even if that is

In the end, I doubt either open-endedness or creativity of interpretation of non-literal speech is a black and white matter. Poetry lies at one end of the spectrum – it is a case where the speaker relinquishes virtually all authority over the interpretation and leaves almost everything to the creative imagination of the hearer. Conversation implicature is the other extreme – in this case successful interpretation requires identifying some content the speaker means to convey over and above what was linguistically encoded with virtually no room left for the free play of the imagination. Most non-literal speech is somewhere in the middle. Lepore and Stone are to be commended for emphasizing the creative aspect of interpretation figurative and evocative language ignored by the Gricean account, but they should not be followed in forgetting about the privileged role of the speaker.

#### 4. Conclusion

I have claimed that *Imagination and Convention* is a deep critique of the Gricean program in philosophy of language because it seeks to question its most fundamental tenet, the thesis that the Lockean model of linguistic communication is fundamentally inadequate. I have conceded that Parts 2 and 3 of the book are largely successful in undermining a host of standard analyses of excess information conveyed through appeal to conversational implicatures. But I also argued that there remain clear and convincing cases of conversational implicature and that rejecting these wouldn't merely fly in the face of intuition but would also be theoretically problematic. Grice may have been mistaken in thinking that the sort of interpretative reasoning involved in linguistic communication rests on cooperativity and rationality alone but, arguably, he was right that it must go well beyond disambiguation.<sup>14</sup>

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granted the problem of epistemic asymmetry remains. That we are sufficiently alike and as a result typically end up imagining the same thing when prompted by metaphors does not explain why the speaker can *correct* the hearer if the latter ends up imagining something unexpected.

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