

Lecture 7.2  
**Grice on Meaning**  
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Pre-lecture reading:

Grice, P. (1957), 'Meaning', *The Philosophical Review* **66**, pp. 377-88.

1. Grice's aim: to analyse a particular use of the verb 'mean'.
2. He starts by pointing to the sense of 'mean' that he wants to analyse. Calls it its 'nonnatural' sense ('mean<sub>NN</sub>'), and distinguishes it from what he calls its 'natural' sense.

Examples of each:

- (2.1)
  - a. Those spots meant measles.
  - b. The recent budget means that we shall have a hard year.
- (2.2)
  - a. Those three rings of the bell mean that the bus is full.
  - b. That remark meant that Smith found his wife indispensable.
  - c. My drawing and showing the picture meant that Mr Y had been unduly familiar.
3. He points to five differences between sentences of each class:
  - (3.1) If the recent budget meant that we shall have a hard year then we shall have a hard year.
  - (3.2) If those three rings of the bell meant that the bus was full, then something was meant by those three rings.
  - (3.3) If those three rings of the bell meant that the bus was full, then someone meant something by those three rings.
  - (3.4) If those three rings of the bell meant that the bus was full, then those three rings meant 'the bus is full'.
  - (3.5) If those spots meant measles then the fact that he had those spots meant that he had measles.
4. Maybe we can draw the distinction more precisely?
  - (4.1) Each sentence in the first class can be paraphrased in the form 'The fact that p meant that q', where 'p' and 'q' are to be replaced by declarative sentences. In these sentences the verb 'mean' expresses a 2-place relation between propositions.
  - (4.2) Each sentence in the second class can be paraphrased in the form 'S meant that p by x', where 'S' is to be replaced by a noun phrase, 'p' by a declarative sentence, and 'x' by an expression that refers to what Grice calls an 'utterance'. In these sentences the verb 'mean' expresses a 3-place relation between a subject, a proposition, and an utterance.
5. Grice raises the question: what is meaning<sub>NN</sub>?
6. He rejects the following 'causal' answer:
  - (6.1) For x to mean<sub>NN</sub> something, x must have (roughly) a tendency to produce in an audience some attitude (cognitive or otherwise) and a tendency, in the case of a

speaker, to be produced by that attitude, these tendencies being dependent on “an elaborate process of conditioning attending the use of the sign in communication.”

Problem: Putting on a tail coat. The given conditions are not sufficient (overgenerate).

Problem: Telling that Jones is an athlete.

Problem: Only works for standard meaning, not particular meaning.

7. Grice offers his own analysis, in four steps:

(7.1) ‘A meant that p by x’ is true iff A intended x to induce the belief that p in some audience.

Problem: Leaving a hanky at the murder scene. The conditions are not sufficient (overgenerate).

(7.2) ‘A meant that p by x’ is true iff A intended x to induce the belief that p in some audience, and intended the audience to recognize that intention.

Problem: I leave the china my daughter has broken lying around for my wife to see. The conditions are not sufficient (overgenerate)

(7.3) ‘A meant that p by x’ is true iff A intended x to induce the belief that p in some audience, and intended the audience to recognize that intention, and that recognition makes a difference.

Problem: Frowning. The conditions are not necessary (undergenerate).

(7.4) ‘A meant that p by x’ is true iff A intended x to induce the belief that p in some audience, *by means of* the recognition of this intention.

Extends the analysis to effects other than inducing beliefs:

(7.5) ‘A meant so-and-so by x’ is true iff A intended x to induce the so-and-so effect in some audience, *by means of* the recognition of this intention.

Need to qualify: Primary intention only.

8. Grice extends the analysis:

(8.1) ‘x meant so-and-so’ is true iff somebody meant so-and-so by x.

Problem: Traffic light changing to red.

(8.2) ‘x means (timeless) so-and-so’ is equivalent to a statement or disjunction of statements about what people mean by x.

(8.3) Suggests that ‘means the same as’, ‘understands’, and ‘entails’ can be analysed along these lines.

9. Question: should “‘grass is green’ means that grass is green” be analysed in this way? What about “‘grass’ means grass”?