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Book Reviews

Paul Grice: Philosopher and Linguist

SIOBHAN CHAPMAN

Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008 (paperback), viii + 247 pp.

Reviewed by KEITH ALLAN, *Monash University*

This book, which was first published in hardcover in 2005, is an enlightened critical review of Grice's work coupled with brief biographical details that make it a valuable and fascinating portrait of the man. Although Grice is undoubtedly a figure of great importance in linguistics, I doubt that he would ever have described himself as a linguist—his interests were always primarily those of a philosopher who often considered matters of interest to linguists. Though he was at the University of California Berkley (UCB) from 1968 to 1988 'there was little personal contact between Grice and the linguists who were making such enthusiastic use of his work' (p. 120). When Grice borrowed Carnap's *Pirots karulize elatically* for discussion, it was not to demonstrate how syntax may be investigated (which a linguist might have done) but 'to consider what concepts might be necessary to the discussion of meaning and reference, freed from the normal preconceptions of such a discussion' (p. 123). And when he wrote (Grice 1986: 58) 'I continue to believe that a more or less detailed study of the way we talk, in this or that region of discourse, is an indispensable foundation for much of the most fundamental kind of philosophizing' (p. 169) he is obviously acting the philosopher, not a linguist.¹ Thus, despite the somewhat misleading subtitle to her book, Chapman throughout is explaining the philosopher to linguists.

The book consists of nine, roughly chronological, chapters: 'The skilful heretic', a celebration of Grice's originality; 'Philosophical influences'; 'Post-war Oxford', the hotbed of ordinary language philosophy; 'Meaning', the move away from Austin; 'Logic and conversation', a discussion of the William James Lectures of 1967; 'American formalism', the move to UCB; 'Philosophical psychology', explorations of modality and conditionals; 'Metaphysics and value', Grice on ethics and modality; and 'Gricean pragmatics' which is largely a survey of Grice's impact on pragmatics, of

¹ It is indicative that whereas linguists always refer to the version of 'Logic and conversation' in Cole and Morgan (1975) compiled by two linguists, Grice himself always referred to the version in Davidson and Harman (1975): 64–75), a volume compiled by two philosophers (p. 186).

neo-Griceanism (e.g. Horn, Levinson), and such Gricean critics as relevance theorists. There are copious notes identifying sources, a list of references used, and a not-very-detailed index (perhaps the worst feature of the book).²

Grice took up philosophy while studying classics at Oxford University (as did Ryle, Ayer, and Austin). Close reading of Ancient Greek philosophers suited Grice's meticulous and analytical style of thought (p. 12). As a formative influence, minute attention was paid to meaning and to the language in which philosophical issues are discussed (13). Grice became a lecturer in philosophy at St John's, Oxford, in 1938 (aged 25) and after WWII was a prominent member of the Saturday 'play group' of ordinary language philosophers led by J.L. Austin. Other members of the group were Stuart Hampshire, Richard M. Hare, Herbert Hart, David Pears, Peter Strawson, Patrick H. Nowell-Smith, James O. Urmson and Geoffrey Warnock; Gilbert Ryle, being older, was peripheral. Grice has said 'there was no "School"; there were no dogmas which united us' (Grice 1986: 50) but the 'play group' did all agree on the rigorous analysis of the everyday use of words and expressions, referred to as 'linguistic botanising' (Grice 1986: 57). Austin described their interest as follows:

When we examine what we should say when, what words we should use in what situations, we are looking again not *merely* at words (or 'meanings', whatever they may be) but also at the realities we use the words to talk about: we are using a sharpened awareness of words to sharpen our perception of, though not as the final arbiter of, the phenomena (Austin 1961).

After Austin's death in 1960, Grice headed the group. Grice later wrote in an unpublished note 'how we talk *ought* to reflect our most solid, cherished and generally accepted opinions' (p. 126) and this view underlies much of his work. His faith in what can be understood from the behaviour of ordinary people recurs in his conviction that the fact that ordinary people believe things exist in the world is indicated not by the sense impressions themselves, but by the responses these elicit in the perceiving creature (pp. 52, 180). Whereas Austin (1962) rejected the logical positivist cum verificationist notion of sense data of Ayer (1946), Grice accepts it in 'The casual theory of perception' (Grice 1961) relying on what people can reasonably say supported by what they do say. Grice was always interested in the role of psychology in linguistic meaning and the philosophical status of rationality (p. 137) and was willing to suppose that the ability people have to take short cuts in reasoning and to make inferential leaps might constitute a definition of intelligence (p. 144). 'Philosophical psychology' was Grice's label for the metaphysical inquiry into the mental properties and structures underlying observable human behaviour (p. 151). A rational being's recognition that the utterances it makes correspond with its psychological states, leads it to think that the utterances of others will likewise correspond with their psychological states (p. 164f). This humanizing of philosophy, which is in the Oxford tradition, contrasts with the attitude of analytic philosophers

² I noticed typos on pp. 64, 104, 113, 139, 151.

such as Russell and Ayer, for whom ordinary language was simply not good enough (p. 29). Russell's theory of descriptions is perhaps the defining example of analytical philosophy (p. 36).

The disparate themes in Grice's life work display a fundamental unity: all focus on aspects of human behaviour and the underlying cognitive processes (p. 4). It may not be irrelevant to this that Grice was a keen, indeed accomplished, amateur musician, cricketer, bridge, and chess player. His first published paper 'Personal identity' (Grice 1941) tackled what it is to be human; it was a variation on Locke's notion of identity as the fulfilment of functions that ensure survival (Locke 1700). For linguists, Grice's most important work is 'Logic and conversation' (Grice 1975), in which he allows that logic can explain much of the meaning of natural language expressions, but there is also the need to systematize and explain the pragmatic aspects of what is meant over and above what is said (p. 2). And as Grice wrote in an unpublished note: 'No treatment of Saying and Implying can afford to omit a study of the notion of Meaning which plainly underlies both these ideas' (p. 180)—in other words sentence meaning (the sense of a sentence) and the use that a speaker puts it to in a particular utterance are both crucial and interdependent aspects of meaning. These are points examined in Grice (1957, 1968, 1969a). He disputed claims such as that in Strawson (1952) that there are aspects of meaning in the ordinary language conditional 'if p then q ' which go beyond, and are not included in, the meaning of the logical conditional ' $p \supset q$ '. In one of the William James lectures Grice disagrees: the logical meaning of 'if p then q ' is exactly ' $p \supset q$ ' but in addition there is a conversational implicature that a connection holds between p and q . Conditionals enable people to ponder the consequences of certain choices just as disjuncts enable people to consider alternatives and eliminate the untenable (Grice 1989). These sorts of devices are necessary to the successful operation of reasoning beings (p. 108). If someone says 'Jones's butler got the hats and coats mixed up' when it was in fact the gardener who did so 'What, in such a case, a speaker has *said* may be false, what he *meant* may be true' (Grice 1969b: 142). Once again Grice is distinguishing sentence meaning from utterance meaning [taking what Recanati (2004) was later to call a 'minimalist' position]. Here and throughout his work, Grice maintains a parsimony he named 'Modified Occam's Razor': 'senses are not to be multiplied beyond necessity' (Grice 1978: 118).

The term 'cooperative principle' seems to have been a late interpolation (p. 102) that has the effect of turning a set of desiderata into a general injunction on interactive behaviour. Not all the maxims were entirely novel, though their compilation and presentation was. Allan (2004) (not referred to by Chapman) showed that many similar ideas can be found in Aristotle—though from an adversarial rather than cooperative standpoint. John Stuart Mill first drew attention to what is known as the Horn scale (p. 89), George Moore, Urmson, and Nowell-Smith to implications of what is said that are relied on in the maxim of quality (p. 92f). The maxim of quantity, the part later revised as Levinson's M-principle, is found in the slogan '*No modification without aberration*' in Austin (1961):

Only if we do the action named in some *special* way or circumstances, different from those in which such an act is naturally done (and of course both the normal and the abnormal differ according to what verb in particular is in question) is a modifying expression called for, or even in order.

Asa Kasher suggested that the cooperative maxims 'are based directly on conclusions of a general rationality principle, without mediation of a general principle of linguistic action' (Kasher 1976: 210); however, for Grice, observance of the maxims is simply an expression of rational behaviour. He wondered if it was a case of what 'a decent chap should do' in the tacit contract of entering into conversation, but in the end decided:

Anyone who cares about the goals that are central to conversation/communication (such as giving and receiving information, influencing and being influenced by others) must be expected to have an interest, given suitable circumstances, in participation in talk exchanges that will be profitable only on the assumption that they are conducted in general accordance with the Cooperative Principle and the maxims (Grice 1975: 49).

What is the meaning of 'profitable' here? In my view this is entirely consistent with the cooperative principle being motivated by face concerns, as I have argued in several publications since Allan (1986). This hypothesis is consistent with the position of Kasher and Grice himself. For instance, with the discussion of celebrated letter of reference for a philosophy job that reads 'Dear Sir, Mr X's command of English is excellent and his attendance at tutorials has been regular. Yours, etc.' Chapman writes of this:

There must be some reason why the writer is reluctant to offer the extra information that would be helpful. The most obvious reason is that the writer does not want explicitly to comment on Mr X's philosophical ability, because it is not possible to do so without writing something socially unpleasant (p. 104).

What 'socially unpleasant' refers to is a face affront. Face lies behind the following comment of Robin Lakoff: 'in most informal conversations, actual communication of important ideas is secondary to merely reaffirming and strengthening relationships' (Lakoff 1973: 298) (p. 202).

In sum, the cooperative principle is motivated by face concerns and is an exercise in face management—which is, of course, rational behaviour for human beings when interacting socially. Indeed a 'reasonableness condition' is incorporated into the cooperative principle by Allan (1986) (and subsequently).

After the 1967 William James Lectures at Harvard, which gave rise to work for which Grice is best known, he spent just one more term at Oxford and emigrated to UCB. His official reason for emigrating was to spend more time with formal logicians such as Carnap, Quine, Kaplan, and Davidson as well as linguists like Chomsky. But the unofficial reasons were: 'Alcohol is cheap, petrol is cheap, gramophone records are cheap' (p. 114f). Until his last year, Grice's 'reluctance ever to consider a piece of work

finished or ready for scrutiny had meant that only 12 articles had been published during a career of over 40 years' (p. 157). Even these 12 articles were often extracted from an unwilling author; for example, his paper 'Meaning' (Grice 1957) was edited and submitted for publication by Strawson not Grice himself (p. 63). He did write and lecture, but mostly not with publication in mind. This is partly because he believed philosophical argument develops during slow and deliberate debate. As a discussant and teacher he would often take up issues from a previous occasion, especially if he had not had an answer at the time (p. 49). He reportedly had a combative style, and was obstinate to the point of perversity (p. 14). Grice was always more interested in the content of his classes than their structure (p. 97); and, unlike Austin, he was not a good lecturer, his lectures being 'full of hesitations, false starts and labyrinthine digressions' (p. 139). A couple of years before his death (aged 75) in August 1988, Grice seemed to have the urge to publish on many of the topics he had written about or lectured on over the previous 40 years (p. 158) but only accomplished putting together and editing the material for *Studies in the Way of Words* which appeared posthumously. His bids for research funding for these end of life projects were unsuccessful because he justified them (as many of us would like to do) with the words 'the character of the enterprise will be sufficient evidence of its significance' and 'their importance seems to me to be beyond question' (p. 182). Grice, whose work pervades pragmatics, would not have flourished under the university system in twenty-first century Australia; indeed he would be damned by it. Thank goodness he lived in more liberal times.

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Syntax: A Generative Introduction (2nd edition)

ANDREW CARNIE

Oxford: Blackwell, 2007

Reviewed by MARK CLENDON

This book would seem to be, with some minor qualifications, an excellent undergraduate text. The blurb on the back tells us it's 'the standard textbook in generative syntax' and I have no reason to doubt that it is. It is chatty and readable ('engaging'), and up until Chapter 11 takes the reader through quite complex ideas in a clear, step-by-step manner. Andrew Carnie states at the outset that this book's approach to generative grammar is just one of several, and that the strain presented here is Principles and Parameters (P&P) modelling, with influences from Chomsky's Minimalism. The first chapter gives us a quick background to the ideas underpinning the generative model, and tells us what kind of model it is—psychological, as opposed to biological or computational. This is a good start, as some textbooks spend too little time, or none at all, on this area. After that, though, we are off to find out the answer to the first of two questions that students are by now asking: how do you work the machinery?

The book has 17 chapters and is divided into five parts. Each chapter is followed by a summary list of definitions for newly-introduced ideas (very handy for student revision), a short list of further readings, and lots of exercises for practice. These last are divided into 'General' and 'Challenge' problem sets, the latter harder than the former. The problem sets are well thought-out and instructional, and will save teachers a lot of preparation time. The chapters are mostly short, which is encouraging to the reader, as most of us like to feel we are making progress. For

Parts 1 and 2 at least, each chapter could correspond to a lecture, complete with homework.

The first part, 'Preliminaries', is wrongly named: there's a lot of material here that is not preliminary to the model in any sense: we are introduced not only to parts of speech and grammatical relations, but also to constituency, tree-diagrams, phrase-structure rules, domination, command, and binding theory. Only the first chapter, 'Generative grammar', is really 'preliminary', offering readers a general theoretical introduction, as noted. The following two chapters introduce parts of speech, phrase-structure rules, and trees. The fourth chapter, on structural relations, is excellent, covering in reasonably abstract terms the geometry of embedding, and the compositional motivation for P&P modelling. The fifth chapter introduces binding theory. At the end of the first part this reader at least felt enthusiastic and motivated to go on.

Part 2, 'The base', is equally well written, covering X-bar Theory in three pithy chapters. The last of the three, Chapter 8, introduces the model's semantic component, the 'thematic relations' of generative grammar.

In most instruction manuals there comes a point where well-ordered progress breaks down, and the accumulation of information becomes cumbersome and unwieldy. For me, and to Andrew Carnie's credit, this didn't happen until three quarters of the way through the P&P part of the book, at Chapter 11; from here on especially, lucid teaching will be needed to guide students through. Part 3, 'Movement', starts off as elegantly as the rest; Chapter 9 covers head-to-head movement, and Chapter 10 DP movement. But from Chapter 11, 'Wh- movement', the well-ordered garden is overgrown by an exuberant jungle where questions proliferate, trees grow to dizzying heights and movement rules snake like lianas up through their branches. On p. 388 the sentence 'Jason gave Maria the tape recorder' needs a tree with 15 hierarchical levels above the rightmost DP node, 11 phonologically null terminal nodes and seven movements. Help appears to be at hand, however; Chapter 12 concludes Part 3 by offering a 'unified theory of movement', but it turns out, for this reader at least, to be unsatisfying. Movement rules may be one thing, but covert movement rules seem like a step too far. Later, talking about PRO on p. 405, and again to his credit, Carnie gives voice to what readers may by now be thinking about a number of explanations of this sort: 'it seems like a technical solution to a technical problem that is raised only by our particular formulation of the constraints'.

And here the strictly undergraduate part of the book could end. Part 4 contains three chapters on 'Advanced topics'. The first of these is Chapter 13, on P&P ways to deal with ditransitive verbs, including 'light' or 'little' vPs. Raising transformations and control theory, including big PRO and little *pro*, are dealt with in Chapter 14, and a good discussion in Chapter 15 on issues relating to binding domains concludes Part 4.

What sets off *Syntax: A Generative Introduction* from other texts is its Part 5, which offers two alternatives to P&P modelling: Chapter 16 gives us a whirlwind tour

around Lexical-Functional Grammar (LFG), and Chapter 17 does the same with Head-Driven Phrase Structure Grammar (HPSG). While no-one is going to get more than a taste of LFG and HPSG from these chapters, a taste may be all that's needed to motivate closer investigation.

Overall, this is an excellent textbook on a notoriously difficult area of scholarship; my difficulties so far relate to the model, not especially to the book. I raise here a couple of further qualifications at the risk of appearing churlish. Firstly, the breadth, depth and general thoroughness of the typos in this text are awesome. After a while I ceased to notice them, they even added to the book's generally chatty feel. However, quite a lot of them are inconvenient. I noted a few before getting bored: challenge problem set 1 on p. 132 involves two sentence examples and a question about a sentence that is neither of them. The revised Principle of Modification on p. 174 contains the stipulation that 'YP must be a sister to X or a projection of X'—this is confusing and possibly wrong; what Carnie means is 'YP must be a sister to X or a sister to a projection of X'. On p. 310 the translation (not the gloss) of a Turkish sentence is 'We appear to you drunk milk'. And so on. Teachers will need to alert students to this feature of the book first off.

Secondly, I would have liked to see a concluding chapter on theory. Engaged students, having found out how to work the machinery, should now be encouraged to ask, why would you *want* to work it? The text provides an answer to this question in part, heuristically, but only in part. When there was no other game in town, syntacticians could leave questions having to do with the theory behind generative modelling to later or postgraduate classes, but in the twenty-first century this may not be a good idea. Having introduced alternative models, the following questions could be raised, if not answered: what problems with P&P motivate these alternatives? What are the advantages of compositionality? Why get rid of movement rules? And at what cost? What are the issues surrounding our preferences for primarily compositional over primarily lexical theories? In the light of advances in bio-imaging technology, do psychological, as opposed to neurological, models of cognition have a foreseeably limited shelf-life? How does generative theory relate to scientific theories of cognition more generally?

In a land dominated by LFG, teachers may question the relevance of a text based on P&P modelling. And indeed, all the scholarship devoted to syntactic non-configurationality is dealt with by reference to a P&P scrambling transformation in a footnote on p. 445. I would respond firstly by saying that the first two parts of Carnie's book, up to the end of the discussion of X-bar theory on p. 240, are excellent, and of universal application in generative grammar. Secondly, a broad education in the field, including familiarity with movement rules and other more advanced topics, can only be to students' advantage. This book does not replace effective teaching, indeed students will need close guidance through it, especially through the problem sets and the section on movement rules. But it does provide a comprehensive, friendly and accessible framework upon which to base a tertiary-level course on formal syntax.