

HOW IMPLICATURES MAKE GRICE AN UNORDINARY ORDINARY LANGUAGE PHILOSOPHER¹

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Abstract

Since Paul Grice first propounded his ideas surrounding conversation and implicature in 1967, they have had a continuous and tremendous impact on theorizing, and indeed on the design of entire research programmes, in philosophy, but also in many other disciplines, in particular linguistic pragmatics. Much of what builds on Grice's original suggestions now belongs to the most powerful hypotheses in the respective fields. But while scholars outside philosophy usually acknowledge Grice's merits for their own areas of interest, they hardly ever pay attention to his original philosophical intentions. These intentions are the central topic of the present paper. Its primary concern is to show how the theory of conversational implicature enabled Grice to adopt a unique theoretical position within 20th century analytic philosophy. In doing so, it also hopes to eliminate a number of widespread misconceptions regarding the explanatory ambitions of Grice's original theory.

Keywords: Grice, Conversational implicature, Saying, Ordinary language philosophy.

I do not find it by any means easy to give a general characterization of the philosophizing in which I engage.... (Grice [1958] 1989: 171)

Since the year 1967, when Paul Grice held his William James Lectures at Harvard, and even more after the second of these lectures was published as "Logic and conversation" in the *Syntax and Semantics* series (Cole & Morgan 1975), his theory of conversational implicature² has had a continuous and tremendous impact on theorizing, and indeed on the design of entire research programmes, in philosophy, linguistics and other

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² What I mean here by "Grice's theory of conversational implicature" is essentially what is comprised in the second of Grice's William James Lectures (i. e. "Logic and conversation"; Grice 1989: ch. 2), which is actually more than just the theory of conversational implicature itself: It also introduces the notions of *saying* and *conventional implicature*, and provides a theory of *conversation* upon which Grice draws in defining conversational implicature. From a better informed point of view, it would be more precise to say that Grice makes his metaphilosophical point with his distinction between *saying* and various types of *implicature* – and to reserve the term "theory of conversational implicature" for Grice's definition and discussion of the concept of conversational implicature and its subconcepts (generalized vs. particularized conversational implicature, etc.).

disciplines. Much of what builds on Grice's original suggestions now belongs to the most powerful hypotheses in the respective fields. To mention just two examples from linguistics, Brown & Levinson's (1978, 1987) account of politeness as strategic language use is still at the focus of the politeness debate; and linguistic pragmaticists basically split into those who actually refer to themselves as "neo-Griceans", and the adherents of Sperber & Wilson's (1986) Relevance Theory, a theory that is equally unthinkable without the inspiration it drew from Grice.

The present paper is not concerned with these developments; its focus is on the theory of conversational implicature as Grice presented it in 1967. It grew out of the observation that the absorption of the theory within linguistic pragmatics and philosophical semantics has resulted in a massively distorted picture of Grice's original intentions underlying his theory. The point I wish to make, in brief, is that the genuinely Gricean theory of implicature, and with it the intellectual achievement it represents, can only be properly understood and assessed if it is read with a view to its metaphilosophical consequences, on which Grice himself lays much weight, while they are usually ignored today by both philosophers and linguists.³ The notion of implicature leads to a conception of linguistic meaning that has grave repercussions on methods and doctrines of the major strands of 20th century language-analytic philosophy: On the one hand, it embodies a criticism of the "orthodox" methodology of *ordinary language philosophy*, which, failing to appreciate the phenomenon of implicature, is prone to produce wrong philosophical conclusions. On the other hand, the notion of implicature opens a way of rebutting the reservations *ideal language philosophers* have about ordinary language, by allowing for the possibility that underneath its vague and ambiguous surface, ordinary language possesses semantic purity and logical precision. The theory of conversational implicature and its applications thus give Grice a unique position within analytic philosophy: He is perhaps best characterized as an "unordinary ordinary language philosopher", who, while rejecting the common method of ordinary language philosophy, is a dedicated advocate of ordinary language itself.

In sections 1 to 4, I give a concise account of the development of language-analytic philosophy in the first half of the 20th century, thus providing the foil against which, I hold, the theory of conversational implicature must be interpreted: I sketch the intellectual climate that led philosophers to turn to the analysis of language, and adumbrate very roughly the two rivalling camps that soon formed themselves within the general movement of language-analytic philosophy: Ordinary language philosophy (henceforth OLP), practised in two distinct versions by Oxonian philosophers and the later Wittgenstein, and ideal language philosophy (ILP), as instigated by Frege and logical positivism. Professional philosophers may find my explanations in this first part rather long-winded, but I believe that it is useful from time to time to take a step back and reconsider those basic issues that were crucial in the forming of one's discipline, issues which indeed still underlie it, but tend to be eclipsed by the more technical points on which contemporary debates usually focus.

Next, in section 5, I introduce my central thesis, showing how the theory of conversational implicature serves Grice both to reveal a crucial problem with the methodology deployed by OLP and to argue that ordinary language might itself possess

³ There are, of course, notable exceptions, such as Strawson (1990), Hanfling (2000), and Saul (2002).

the semantic precision and definiteness demanded by ILP of an artificial language for use in science. Section 6 broadens the perspective on OLP and Grice's relation to it; it is intended to add force to my central point, by showing that the criticizing of OLP-methodology is something of a recurrent topic in Grice's work that can be traced back to his earliest texts.

1. The linguistic turn: Ideal language vs. ordinary language ideologies

The thesis that it is essential for a proper grasp of Grice's theory of conversational implicature to read it in the light of the opposition between ILP and OLP of course presupposes a basic characterization of these (partly) antagonistic philosophical movements. This in turn requires a brief historical digression, beginning at the very inception of language-analytic philosophy at the end of the 19th century, for which the label of "the linguistic turn" has currency in philosophical historiography since Rorty's (1967) edition of a collection of representative essays. Given the narrow limits of my account, I need not point out that it is irresponsibly simplistic, in some passages indeed bordering on the false. Nevertheless, I believe it fulfils its modest end of giving some rough idea of what it meant for philosophy to make a "linguistic turn", and how differently this turn was interpreted by ILP and OLP.⁴

One of the important developments in the intellectual history of the 19th century is the emancipation of the specialized sciences from what had previously gone under the very large and undifferentiated umbrella of "philosophy". Whereas Aristotle, Newton and Leibniz had seen themselves as biologists, physicists or mathematicians cum philosophers, "philosophy" now split up into separate disciplines – more or less the empirical and formal sciences as we know them today –, each having its specific methodologies and conceptual frameworks. The second half of the 19th and the first years of the 20th century furthermore saw some of the greatest theoretical breakthroughs in the distinct fields – suffice it here to mention the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species* in 1859, and the launch of relativity theory around 1900 – and one would imagine that the whole of Western educated society was in a general state of euphoria about science. This threw philosophy into an existential crisis: If all interesting knowledge was accumulated by scientists, what was there left to do for philosophers? As Stemmer (1996: 401; my transl.) puts it, philosophy was at a point where it "fought against the impression of its own uselessness". Some less scientifically-minded philosophers, like Francis Bradley in England and Martin Heidegger in Germany, were bold enough to perpetuate the tradition of classical and idealist metaphysics. Others, however, were repelled by the thought of metaphysical speculation in the age of science, and sought a way out of their fix that was more in line with cool scientific reason. What they came up with is what is captured by the slogan of the "linguistic turn": Their idea was that philosophy must turn from the study of the phenomena to the study of linguistic statements about the phenomena; it should be concerned exclusively with the analysis of language.

⁴ The to my mind best overviews of the relevant historical developments are offered by Hacker (1996) and Urmson (1956a). A more extensive treatment is provided by Soames (2003).

Now, while this may serve as a general formula that summarizes nicely the overall thrust of language-analytic philosophy, it is also utterly misleading in so far as it suggests a single homogeneous metaphilosophical stance; but the formula in fact covers widely different philosophical convictions. The principal divide running through language-analytic philosophy is that between ILP and OLP. This divide is commonly recognized both by historiographers of philosophy and the philosophers themselves on either side of it (cf. Rorty 1967). It is, I think, best understood as a deeply ideological dispute concerning the relevance of science for everyday human life: While both camps have great respect for scientific insights, they differ on the impact these should have on our understanding of the world surrounding us. ILP sees science as setting the "standards of reality" against which we should critically measure our everyday experience. OLP (at least in its Oxonian version) emphasizes the fact that whatever science tells us about "physical reality", the conceptual scheme by which we make sense of our experience remains the same: We do not feel electric impulses running through nerve cells, and we do not perceive electromagnetic waves of varying length; what we feel is pain, and what we see are red and blue colours.

In the actual philosophical work of ILP and OLP, the divide is marked along two dimensions. Firstly, there is the kind of language that is made the subject of philosophical investigation. Ideal language philosophers (henceforth ILPers) focus on the languages of science: Their view is that mathematicians, physicists, biologists, etc. make statements about their respective subjects of study, and that these statements in turn are the subject of philosophy: Philosophy clarifies the precise meaning of the statements of the scientist; it thus becomes a complementary science to the mathematical and empirical sciences. As Grice (1986: 52) puts it, the ILPer sees science as the "sovereign" accumulator of human knowledge, and philosophy as the "queen-consort" who clarifies the sovereign's statements. Ordinary language philosophers (OLPers), in contrast, tend to be more interested in how the man in the street makes sense of the world. In order to find out, they orient themselves to normal, everyday language; they study ordinary language, and are at most marginally concerned with scientific jargon. The second dimension on which ILP and OLP differ concerns the mode of exposition of linguistic analyses: ILPers hold that clarification can only be achieved by stating results in rigorously regimented artificial languages, that ordinary language lacks the precision required for the task. OLPers consider normal language not only as the proper subject of philosophical study, but also as the adequate medium for presenting philosophical analyses.

So far, all of this may sound rather obscure to those unacquainted with the actual procedures and arguments employed; I hope that the following quick delves into the work of ILP and OLP may shed sufficient light on what the positions entail. This will prepare the ground not only for a technical understanding of Grice's particular conception of philosophy, but also for grasping its ideological undercurrent and, above all, for attaining a clear notion of the methodological and ideological implications of his theory of conversational implicature.

2. Ideal language philosophy: Concept reduction

2.1. Frege

Though Gottlob Frege (1848-1925) to my knowledge never explicitly aired any strong views on what philosophy should deal with and how it should proceed, it is his work in which the surface characteristics of ILP become clearly manifest for the first time. Frege is concerned with analysing the language of one specific science, mathematics; or, more precisely, with the language of one of the subfields of mathematics, arithmetic. In the two books *Grundlagen der Arithmetik* (The Foundations of Arithmetic) of 1884 and *Grundgesetze der Arithmetik* (The Basic Laws of Arithmetic) of 1893, he aims to show that the concepts and laws of arithmetic are reducible to purely logical concepts and laws. This he does by a procedure that can be characterized essentially as a study of the concepts and statements of arithmetic, and an attempt at redefinition and reformulation of these in purely logical terms. Thus in the *Grundlagen*, he argues, roughly, that the number 0 can be logically defined as the extension ("Begriffsumfang") of the concept 'be in a one-one correspondence with the concept 'not equal to itself'.⁵

Exclusively for his undertaking, Frege develops an artificial language that allows a rigorous formulation of logical statements: The *Begriffsschrift* (Concept Script), published five years before the *Grundlagen* in 1879. In the preface to the *Begriffsschrift*, Frege explains that in order to demonstrate convincingly "how far one could get in arithmetic with mere [logical] inference"⁶ – which he planned to do in the *Grundlagen* and *Grundgesetze* – it was expedient to present chains of logical inference in a maximally explicit way.

In striving to meet this demand most rigorously, I found an obstacle in [ordinary] language, which, however complicated one formulated, did not allow one, as relations got more and more intricate, to achieve the level of accuracy that was called for by my purpose. From this want sprang the idea of the present concept script. (Frege 1879: III)

However, Frege made active use of his newly invented logical notation only in the *Grundgesetze*, due to a lack of immediate acclaim on the part of other mathematicians and philosophers (which was to change dramatically later).

Frege's *Grundlagen* and *Grundgesetze* provide a perfect illustration of what it means to do philosophy by analysing the statements of science so as to clarify their meaning. They also show that *language-analytic philosophy* should not be confused with *philosophy of language*, although the former is of course a major catalyst for the latter: Frege's enterprise is one in the philosophy of mathematics: His point with the

⁵ A note on typography: Though I may not follow the pattern fully coherently, I will try to stick to the following conventions: "quotation marks" for quotes, hedged usage, and mentioned expressions; 'inverted commas' for quotes within quotes, ordinary concepts, and meanings; and *italics* for emphasis, technical terms (when newly introduced), and technical terms for ordinary concepts (when newly introduced).

⁶ Translations of quotes and technical terms from Frege, Wittgenstein and Carnap are mine.

reduction of arithmetic to logic is, on the one hand, to provide a clarification of the fundamental concepts of arithmetic by spelling them out in logical terms; on the other hand, to prove (contra Kant and Mill) that mathematical truths are analytic truths. However, the clarifying analysis of arithmetical into logical concepts of course presupposes a conceptual framework for talking about concepts, meaning, and other linguistic entities and phenomena themselves, in abstraction from any particular linguistic system; and indeed, it was the perceived necessity of further clarification of some of the linguistic concepts Frege used in his analysis that spawned those of his other investigations that are more properly described as pertaining to the philosophy of language.⁷

That the language-analytic approach to general philosophical issues leads to an investigation into language itself is a recurring pattern in language-analytic philosophy, and is of course entirely natural: If a general philosophical argument relies on linguistic analysis, then one ought to be confident about the concepts and principles presupposed by the analytic apparatus one employs. It was Frege's fate to have it pointed out by Russell (cf. Frege's afterword to the *Grundgesetze*) that his reformulation of arithmetic in logical terms was crucially flawed and could not prove its point (with which, incidentally, Russell was in agreement). The defect, as it turned out in retrospective, resulted from an immature conceptual basis – namely, insufficient clarity about the notion of "Begriffsumfang" (cf. Künnle 1996: 326). As we shall see, it is the favourite philosophical occupation of Grice to undermine general philosophical conclusions that are based on linguistic analysis, by revealing that the conceptual basis of the analysis is inadequate.

2.2. Logical positivism

The second strand within ILP I want to discuss is the logical positivism of the Vienna Circle. The latter was a group of philosophers in the Vienna of the 1920s, each of whom tended to be firmly at home in one or another empirical and/or formal science. Its core consisted of the sociologist Otto Neurath, the physicist Moritz Schlick, and Rudolf Carnap, who in the 1910s had studied philosophy and mathematics with Frege in Jena. Carnap is the prototype of an ILPer, and it is mainly his work that I present here under the general label of "logical positivism".

Whereas Frege is exclusively concerned with arithmetic, the logical positivists have a more comprehensive programme for the analysis of the statements of science. Their sights are set on the languages of the whole range of scientific disciplines, from mathematics to economics and psychology. Apart from the wider perspective, however, their philosophical procedure is exactly analogous to that of Frege: Frege analyses arithmetical statements, where "analysis" basically means reformulation in the language of logic. The logical positivists also analyse, in addition to the statements of mathematics, those of the empirical sciences, where "analysis" again means reformulation; reformulation, that is, in a unified language of science developed by the philosopher, in which the statements of all sciences can be (re-)expressed.

⁷ Cf. the essays collected in Frege 1993 and Frege 1994.

By way of example, we may take Carnap's (1932) translation of the statements of empirical psychology into this unified language. Carnap takes the unitary scientific language to be physicalistic, in the sense that its descriptive vocabulary consists exclusively of terms that refer to externally observable physical events. Suppose then a psychologist makes a statement in which the concept 'knowledge' occurs, e.g. "Person X knows that p".⁸ The unitary scientific language does not contain any terms that refer to mental states; it forces us to translate statements that make use of the apparently mentalistic concept 'knowledge' into statements about externally observable behaviour or dispositions to such behaviour. The psychologist's statement will thus come out as something along the lines of "To stimulus S, person X will react so-and-so".

Parallel to Frege and his *Begriffsschrift*, Carnap aims at an artificial, formalized version of the universal language of science in which the statements of all sciences can be restated in rigorous and explicit fashion. The most concrete proposal for such a language he provides is his physicalist "Sprache II" (1934: ch.3), in which the statements of all the sciences become statements about properties or relations of areas in spacetime. Carnap here gives two examples of how statements of psychology and sociology translate into physicalist language:

'A is angry' or 'A is thinking' amounts to: 'object A (i. e. that-and-that area in spacetime) is in such-and-such a [physical] state'; 'That-and-that community is a monetary economy' means: 'in that-and-that area in spacetime, such-and-such [physical] events take place'. (Carnap 1934: 105)

Of course, Carnap's idea is not that scientists must themselves present their results in the artificial language; all that is required is that their statements be in principle translatable into it.

The philosophical purpose of the logical positivist kind of analysis of the statements of science is twofold: First, it spells out the scientist's statements and gives precise definitions to the concepts occurring in them, thus clarifying what exactly the psychologist means when she asserts that X knows that p. This has the further effect of engendering conceptual precision in science: Of course, we all have our lay concept of knowledge, of which we have an intuitive understanding and which works satisfactorily for our everyday purposes; but the logical positivists presume that the common concepts of ordinary people are generally vague and "metaphysically loaded" (cf. Grice [1967] 1989: 23): That the ordinary concept of knowledge, for instance, involves reference to some nonphysical entity like consciousness that is taken to exist over and above all physical processes. Therefore, science must replace common concepts by *termini technici* that are precise and strictly reducible to observational terms. There is no problem if they deviate from their ordinary counterparts; if, for example, phenomena which we ordinarily characterize as cases of someone knowing something are excluded by a scientific theory of knowledge, and vice versa. What is decisive is that science end up with the best (i. e. the most elegant, economic, etc.) account of the phenomena.

⁸ I chose 'knowledge' as an example here for expository reasons; Carnap's own example is 'excitement'. Cf. Carnap 1932: 131.

The second aim of logical positivist analysis goes hand in hand with the first, but is more important: It is the elimination of all statements coming from scientists and philosophers that the logical positivists consider to be devoid of sense. Thus, if a psychologist makes statements about knowledge that cannot be interpreted as statements about externally observable physical events – i. e., if his statements cannot be translated into the unified physicalist language – then he is considered to be simply talking nonsense. This criterion of translatability into physicalist language is, on the one hand, intended to purge the sciences from what logical positivism condemns as metaphysical aberrations: Carnap (1932: 117) laments that the ordinary, "metaphysical" interpretation of psychological concepts is at the time of his writing still preferred to their definition in physical terms not only by laymen, but also by professional psychologists: "The various sciences", he writes, "are at very different stages as concerns the elimination of metaphysical impurities". While contemporary physics is "already nearly freed of metaphysics", in the case of psychology "the striving for a metaphysics-free discipline has only just begun". In the domain of philosophy, on the other hand, the criterion of translatability serves the purpose of revealing the statements of various traditional philosophical disciplines, such as classical metaphysics and ethics, to be nonsensical: Statements containing ethical and metaphysical terms like "good", "bad", "the absolute" and so on cannot be reduced to statements about externally observable behaviour, and are therefore unscientific. Carnap (1934: 204) calls them "pseudo-statements [Scheinsätze]" that have "no empirical content". At best, they can be interpreted as "expressions of feelings, which in turn stimulate feelings and desires [Willenseinstellungen] on the part of the hearer". Like Frege's thesis that arithmetic truths are analytic truths, the logical positivists' refutation of ethics as a collection of pseudo-statements is a philosophical position resting on a certain kind of linguistic analysis; this position will later be cast in doubt by a critique of the presumptions underlying the linguistic analysis, a critique coming from John L. Austin. We will see below in section 5 what Austin's objections are.

Let me summarize then what form language-analytic philosophy takes in the ILP of Frege and logical positivism. First, we should now have a sufficiently clear idea in what sense the philosophy of Frege and Carnap consists in the analysis of language, and in what sense their kind of philosophy can be viewed as a "queen-consort" to science: Frege analyses the language of arithmetic, Carnap the language of the whole range of the sciences. Both have the immediate aim of clarifying the concepts used in the respective sciences, and the more indirect, but in fact primary aim of making general philosophical points by means of such clarification. Second, we have seen that Frege and Carnap both explicitly criticize ordinary language, and see fit to replace ordinary language by ideal, artificial languages for their respective purposes: Frege finds normal language unsuitable for formulating logical truths, Carnap declares ordinary concepts as unsuitable for science. The logical positivists' conviction that all meaningful concepts and statements can be (re-)rendered in a unitary artificial language, and that metaphysics must be eliminated by showing that its concepts and statements cannot be thus translated, leads us directly to the next philosopher we need to consider, with whom we shall make the transition from ILP to OLP: Ludwig Wittgenstein.

3. Wittgenstein: From ideal to ordinary language

The so-called "early Wittgenstein", or "Wittgenstein I", or "Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus*", as he is variously referred to, exerted a major influence on logical positivism. The *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, completed in 1918 but not published before 1921, in many ways prefigures Carnap's philosophical project, as Carnap himself (1934: 208) emphasizes. In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein characterizes as the purpose of all sensible philosophical work the "logical clarification of thoughts" (4.112),⁹ where by a "thought" is meant a "meaningful sentence [sinnvoller Satz]" (4):¹⁰ "The result of philosophy is not 'philosophical sentences', but the becoming-clear of sentences. Philosophy's task is to clarify and sharply delimit thoughts which otherwise are, as it were, opaque and blurred" (4.112). The sentences that philosophy is supposed to clarify are not just any random sentences, but those of natural science: "The sentence presents the existence or non-existence of facts" (4.1). "The totality of the true sentences is the total natural science (or the totality of the natural sciences)" (4.11).

For Wittgenstein, then, exactly as for Frege and Carnap, philosophy consists in the clarifying analysis of scientific statements. Moreover, Wittgenstein envisages for such clarification an artificial language which allows a "clear presentation" (cf. 4.115 below) of what the analysed sentence states; and it will not come as a surprise that this clarificatory undertaking has the same ultimate philosophical purpose for Wittgenstein as it has for Carnap: That of getting rid of metaphysics. Thus, by engaging in the activity of clarifying the sentences of science, philosophy "delimits the area with which natural science can deal" (4.113). "It will point out what is unsayable by clearly presenting the sayable" (4.115). This, incidentally, is also the background to Wittgenstein's famous saying, all too often decontextualized, that "[w]hat can be said at all can be said clearly; and whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent" (1984: 9): this is just the trenchant summary of the *Tractatus*' refutation of metaphysics. The point is driven home in passages such as the following:

Most of the sentences and questions that have been written about philosophical matters are not false, but nonsensical. Therefore, we cannot give any sort of answer to questions of this kind, but can merely state their nonsensicality. Most of the sentences and questions of the philosophers rest on the fact that we do not understand the logic of our language. (They are of the sort of question of whether the Good is more or less identical than the Beautiful.) (4.003)

And again, in the preface (1984: 9): "The book [i. e. the *Tractatus*] treats the problems of philosophy and shows, I believe, that the posing of these problems rests on a misunderstanding of the logic of our language".

⁹ I follow the custom of indicating paragraph- rather than page numbers when quoting from Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* and *Philosophical Investigations*.

¹⁰ Wittgenstein's "Satz" is usually translated as "proposition". I have the impression that in (4), where Wittgenstein speaks of a "sinnvoller Satz", what he means is indeed 'meaningful sentence', whereas in all following instances of "Satz" (in which "sinnvoll" is absent), he uses "Satz" with the meaning of 'proposition', or perhaps 'statement'. This however is a matter of Wittgenstein-interpretation, with which I am not concerned here. I therefore allow myself to translate "Satz" as "sentence" throughout.

In short, the argument of the *Tractatus* is that all sensible statements – i. e. those of science – can be clearly expressed in an artificial language which captures the "logic of our language"; and that metaphysical statements violate the "logic of our language", and so belong to the domain of the inexpressible about which one must be silent. As far as this goes, Wittgenstein is just as prototypical an ILPer as is Carnap. There are, however, a number of features in Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy that distinguish it from Carnap's, the most striking of which I think deserve mention here.

Firstly, Wittgenstein's animosity towards metaphysics is different in nature from that of Carnap: Carnap was a hard-headed scientist who felt that there was nothing to the world beyond what one could sooner or later come to grips with by scientific methods. Wittgenstein, in contrast, had a penchant for the mystic. Thus, when he writes that much of traditional philosophy is nonsensical, what he sets his sights on is only the *scholarly approach* to ethics, metaphysics and religion, not the issues themselves. These issues elude scientific treatment, which is treatment that ends in linguistic presentation of insights; they are beyond linguistic grasp, and therefore require that one remain silent about them: "Scepticism", for instance, "is *not* irrefutable, but palpably nonsensical, when it raises doubts where no questions can be asked" (6.51; original italics). In other words, Wittgenstein only rejects the metaphysical *disciplines*, not the *issues*. Indeed, he seems to consider these the big issues, while those science can treat are of rather limited import: "We feel that even when all *possible* scientific questions are answered, the problems of our life haven't been so much as touched on" (6.52; original italics).

The second divergence between Carnap and Wittgenstein is closely entangled with the first: Carnap emphasized that philosophy as he performed it – logical analysis and the construction of artificial languages – was itself a science, complementary to the other sciences; the statements of the language-analyst are, according to Carnap (cf. 1934: 209-210), themselves expressible in physicalist language. In Wittgenstein's opinion, however, it is impossible to make scientific statements about the ideal language of science, since these cannot themselves be stated in this language. This leads him to an utterly intriguing view of philosophy that is, however, not easy to grasp. The key to understanding it lies in the statement already quoted that "the result of philosophy is not 'philosophical sentences', but the becoming-clear of sentences" (4.112): philosophy does not consist of the statements in which philosophical arguments and explanations are formulated, but is the activity of clarification itself. As Wittgenstein writes in another passage:

The right philosophical method would actually be this: to say nothing but what can be said, that is, sentences of natural science – that is, something which has nothing to do with philosophy – and then, whenever anyone tried to say something metaphysical, to demonstrate to him that he had not given any meaning to certain signs in his sentences. (6.53)

Now, the *Tractatus* itself obviously consists of a collection of statements; these statements – being about philosophy, and about the "logic of our language" and how it can be captured in an artificial language – cannot belong to the totality of the sayable that is science. Does the *Tractatus* therefore violate its own requirement that "whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent"? Does it consist of a load of nonsense?

The answer is both yes and no. In so far as the *Tractatus* presents itself to us as a book containing a set of non-scientific sentences, it is indeed nonsensical, as Wittgenstein admits: "My sentences are clarificatory in as much as those who understand me recognize them, in the end, as nonsensical" (6.54). The trick is that despite its outer form of a book, the *Tractatus* must be conceptualized not as a set of (meta)philosophical sentences, but as a kind of activity fossilized in ink: The activity of "clarification".

I won't go deeper into the details of Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy in the *Tractatus*. The important point for my purposes here is Wittgenstein's view that philosophy ideally would be a matter of transient and sporadic acts of clarification that are performed on any occasion where a metaphysician tries to say something. This conception is upheld in Wittgenstein's transition to "Wittgenstein II", which takes place at the end of the 1920s and which is the transition of Wittgenstein from an ILPer to an OLPer. In his development into an OLPer, Wittgenstein sticks to the idea that metaphysical statements rest on a lack of understanding of the "logic of our language" (or, rather, a lack of interest in it: The metaphysician does not just misunderstand the "logic of our language"; he does not even *find it relevant* to understand it); what changes is that the problem with metaphysical statements is no longer that they are beyond the expressive possibilities of an ideal language in which the "logic of our language" is to be captured, but that they are beyond the linguistic habits of ordinary speakers. It is now ordinary language use that delimits the "sayable".

Take, for example, the metaphysical thesis that sense-impressions are private: That only I can know whether I am in pain, while others can only hypothesize, but never know for sure, that I am. On Wittgenstein's view, this thesis is nonsensical (i. e. beyond what can be talked about), since it goes beyond ordinary language: For one thing, no ordinary speaker would ever say of someone that he *knows that* he is in pain: "It cannot be said of of me at all (except perhaps in a joking manner) that I *know* that I'm in pain. What is it supposed to mean – except perhaps that I *am* in pain?" (1953: § 246; original italics). It is only the philosophically (mis)educated who could thus abuse ordinary language, and in so doing create a problem where there is none; if one sticks to ordinary usage, the question of whether one *knows that* one is in pain simply does not arise. Analogously with the second part of the thesis: In ordinary discourse, there is a specific set of reasons why knowledge of other people's sensations could be doubted; for instance, we might suspect that the other is deceiving us into believing that he is in pain, or that we misunderstand the outward signs of pleasure as signs of pain. But where there is no such reason, it is nonsensical to deny that one knows the other's sensation; one would then play the part of the sceptic who "raises doubts where no questions can be asked" (*Tractatus* 6.51; cf. above).¹¹

Another example is provided by the metaphysician's quest for essential definitions: "When philosophers use a word – 'knowledge', 'being', 'object', 'I', 'sentence', 'name' – and try to come to grips with the essence of the thing, one must always ask: Is the word ever actually used in this manner in the language in which it is at home?" (1953: § 116). According to Wittgenstein, a study of the ordinary use of such words as "know" and "knowledge" will show that ordinary speakers apply these to various cases

¹¹ The sceptic of course does give concrete reasons for his doubts. These, however, are not empirically verifiable, whereas all doubt arising from common reasons is at least in principle allayable by empirical procedures. Cf. also Malcolm's (1942) argument against scepticism, section 6 below.

that are related only by family resemblance, and that not all ordinary speakers draw the line between cases and non-cases of knowledge at the same place.¹² As a consequence, a strict definition in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions for application is impossible (cf. Passmore 1966: 425-426). It is, then, again nonsensical, in the sense of going beyond ordinary language use, to ask the metaphysical question "What is knowledge?". What we can do, at most, is to pick out arbitrarily one or several of the cases to which all or most ordinary speakers apply the word "knowledge" and take these as the basis for a definition of a scientific concept of knowledge (cf. §§ 68/69). But whereas this can be done in the case of "knowledge", Wittgenstein holds that for terms such as "good" and "beautiful", the procedure is not feasible. He compares replacing an ordinary, fuzzy term by an arbitrarily delimited concept to replacing a picture of blurred colour patches by a copy in which the patches are sharply delimited (cf. §§ 76/77). In the case of "knowledge", Wittgenstein argues, the kinship of the two pictures will be "just as undeniable as the difference" (§ 76). However, in the case of "good" and "bad", the original picture is blurred to such an extent that there is no hint of a boundary between the patches. Providing a sharp copy here becomes a hopeless task; any two copiers may deny with equal justification that there is any kinship between the other's copy and the original.

According to Wittgenstein II, what the serious philosopher must do against impending metaphysics is, as for Wittgenstein I, to show what is not sayable by clearly presenting what is sayable – only that this is now done by describing ordinary language use. The philosopher must give a detailed overview of the various ways in which "knowledge" and "know" are used by ordinary speakers; thus he will make it clear that no essential definition of knowledge is possible, and that it is not just false, but absurd to state the thesis that one can only know oneself that one is in pain – that the thesis' sense rests on a misuse of ordinary language. "We [i. e., the serious philosophers] lead the words back from their metaphysical to their everyday usage" (1953: § 116).

Wittgenstein's philosophy can then be summarized as follows: At all stages, Wittgenstein is concerned with the clear presentation of the sayable, in order to demonstrate what is not sayable. With the shift from Wittgenstein I to Wittgenstein II, the emphasis lies ever more clearly on the second objective: While the *Tractatus* still contains a certain amount of theorizing about, among other things, the properties of an ideal language, Wittgenstein II definitively drives philosophy into suicide. Certainly, he still has a job to offer the philosopher – namely, that of describing ordinary language use – but the sole purpose of this job is to reveal the impossibility of stating any philosophical theory: "Philosophy", in short, "is a tool which is useful only against philosophers and the philosopher in us" (unpubl. ms., English in original; q. a. Stemmer 1996: 408).

4. Oxonian ordinary language philosophy: Concept elucidation

Wittgenstein develops his destructive variety of OLP in Cambridge, where he teaches from 1930 onwards. At that other major English university, Oxford, a different, more

¹² Note that Wittgenstein thus shares Carnap's presumption that ordinary concepts are vague.

constructive kind of OLP takes shape mostly after the war years, under the lead of John L. Austin and Peter F. Strawson.

At the risk of being more misleading than helpful, one could perhaps say that the Oxonian variety of OLP (henceforth OxOLP) takes what it considers to be the correct aspects of the views of Carnap and Wittgenstein II and blends them into a new conception of language-analytic philosophy. Take again the question of what knowledge is. For Carnap, the question is *answerable*; it is settled by an *analysis of the scientific concept* of knowledge; i. e. by showing how this scientific concept is spelt out in the terms of the physicalist language. For Wittgenstein II, the question is *unanswerable*, which is shown by describing the fuzzy use of "knowledge" and related words in ordinary language. OxOLP holds, with Carnap, that the question of what knowledge is is *answerable*; however, it is not settled by showing how the scientific concept of knowledge is spelt out in some ideal language; rather, it is settled by an *analysis of the ordinary concept*; and in order to arrive at such an analysis (or, more precisely: in order to test the adequacy of any such proposed analysis) – here, Wittgenstein II comes into play – one must have a clear overview of how "knowledge" and related words are used in ordinary discourse.

Under this Oxonian conception of philosophy, some of the traditional issues that were banned from "serious" philosophy by Carnap and Wittgenstein are salvaged. For one thing, OxOLPers are convinced that the fuzziness of the usage of ordinary words, though a real phenomenon, is overestimated by Wittgenstein, and that the quest for essential definitions of ordinary concepts is a feasible task (cf. Grice [1958] 1989: 175, 177). To people like Austin and Strawson, questions concerning the definition not only of a concept like 'knowledge', but also of moral and ethical concepts are sensible philosophical questions. However, to them, a satisfactory answer cannot consist in an analysis of the scientific concept that reduces this concept to the basic vocabulary of some ideal language. Rather, they seek to analyse ordinary concepts, by defining them in terms of other ordinary concepts. Strawson (1992: 19) points out that a more adequate term than "analysis" for this kind of undertaking would be "elucidation": Ordinary concepts are not reconstructed in terms of a closed set of basic concepts, but are elucidated by spelling them out in ordinary terms. This has the further corollary that circular analyses are unproblematic: The analysis of a concept is elucidating even if the concepts that spell it out are ultimately defined, after a smaller or greater number of intermediary definitions, by reference to the original concept.

Methodologically, such analyses proceed from and are accountable to the ordinary usage of relevant linguistic expressions. Thus, in the search for a definition of the ordinary concept of knowledge, the analyst will imagine situations in which an ordinary speaker would say of someone that he knows something. Pondering on these, the analyst may conjecture that the relevant criteria underlying the use of expressions of the form "X knows that p" are (1) that X believes that p, (2) that X has good reasons to believe that p, and (3) that p is indeed the case. Accordingly, he will propose defining knowledge as justified true belief. Now, against this analysis or definition, another Oxonian analyst might raise the following objection: The ordinary concept of knowledge is here defined as a special case of belief. But if knowledge was indeed a kind of belief, one would expect that it could be said of a person X who *knows* that p that X also *believes* that p; however, in ordinary discourse, "X believes that p" is used in situations where X does *not* know p, or at least where it is not clear that X knows p.

This is a fact about normal language use which speaks against an analysis of knowledge as a special case of belief; in ordinary discourse, it would be incorrect, perhaps absurd, for an ordinary speaker to use "X believes that p" when it is absolutely clear that X knows that p.

The second respect in which OxOLP recuperates metaphysics from the realm of the nonsensical is that some classical metaphysical theses are taken seriously again in the sense that they are rejected as false, rather than swept aside as meaningless: Let us return to that other example discussed by Wittgenstein, the thesis that only I can know whether I am in pain, while others can only hypothesize, but never know for certain, that I am. For Wittgenstein, this is a thesis pertaining to an aspect of reality about which "no questions can be asked"; it is therefore nonsensical in the special sense discussed above, and worth no consideration. OxOLPers tend to take a subtly different view: They would agree with Wittgenstein that the *problem* to which the thesis gives an answer ("Can other people know that I am in pain?") only arises under ignorance of ordinary language use. Nevertheless, they would treat the thesis as a *genuine philosophical thesis about the ordinary concept of knowledge*, to the effect that this concept correctly applies only to propositions about one's own sensations, but not to propositions about the sensations of other people. The classical response of the OxOLPer to the thesis-proponent would be to point out that the thesis goes directly against ordinary usage, where the words "know" and "knowledge" commonly apply exactly the other way round. On the presumption adopted by most OxOLPers that the way in which ordinary terms are used in everyday statements allows direct conclusions about ordinary concepts, the thesis is thus rejected as (blatantly) false, rather than nonsensical.

I am aware that these few remarks on OxOLP may have raised more questions than they have answered. I postpone their resolution (or at least the attempt at their resolution) until section 6, where I will examine in some more detail the methods and arguments of OxOLP. For the moment, let us be content with remaining superficial, so as to facilitate our retaining an overview of the basic characteristics of ILP, Wittgenstein and OxOLP, and to allow a first grasp of Grice's position against this overall background.

5. Grice's place

Our historical survey of language-analytic philosophy, which has brought us from Frege's foundational work in mathematics via logical positivism and the two stages of Wittgensteinian philosophy to Oxonian OLP, though very sketchy, has hopefully clarified to some degree the general remarks made in section 2 concerning the basic characteristics of ILP and OLP. Let me recapitulate these features here once again: ILP focusses on the statements of science and their analysis in terms of artificial languages, and considers the everyday concepts of the common man, as they manifest themselves in ordinary language use, as inadequate for scientific purposes. OLP places just these ordinary concepts and the ordinary use of language at the center of attention: The self-destructive variety of OLP of Wittgenstein II aims to dissolve philosophical problems by reference to ordinary language use; the constructive variety that is practised in

Oxford tries to provide analyses of ordinary concepts based on observations of ordinary language use. Where, now, does Grice belong?

As far as his curriculum vitae is concerned, Grice firmly belongs to OxOLP: Before his move to the United States in 1967, Grice spent more than 30 years at Oxford University, where he was a pupil and colleague of Austin and Strawson. Grice is often regarded, and liked to regard himself, as a core representative of OxOLP, and on more than one occasion he defended the Oxonian concern for the "thinking of the layman" against the scientism of ILPers (cf. 1986: 52 f., [1987] 1989: 378). However – and here we approach my central thesis – as an OxOLPer, Grice is also to some extent a "traitor", and it is this aspect, played down by himself and largely unobserved by commentators (but cf. Hanfling 2000: ch. 10), which in my view makes Grice such an interesting philosopher. At this point, I wish to make some brief remarks on Austin's theory of speech acts and how it fits into Austin's general conception of philosophy as I have sketched it in the last section. This will, on the one hand, bring out an interesting parallel between Austin's speech act theory and Grice's theory of conversational implicature; at the same time, it will help us better to perceive wherein Grice's "betrayal" of OxOLP lies.

I have already indicated that OxOLP rejects Carnap's reductive analysis of (scientific) concepts. Strawson (1992: chs. 2 and 6), for instance, explicitly argues against the reductive programme. Austin's refutation of the logical positivist kind of conceptual analysis is more indirect and implicit; it is embodied in his theory of speech acts, first presented in his William James Lectures at Harvard in 1955: Austin here does not directly attack logical positivist analysis itself, but the theory of language on which this kind of analysis relies: Namely, the presumption that the totality of language consists of two strictly distinguishable sets of linguistic utterances: A set of meaningful statements that are all translatable into the artificial language of science, and a set of untranslatable, and therefore strictly speaking meaningless, "pseudo-statements". Austin holds that there is no such clean division of utterances into statements and pseudo-statements. Rather, in his view, *any* linguistic utterance must be regarded as an element in the performance of a speech act, and must be assessed not only in terms of its empirical content, but also in terms of its role in the happy or unhappy performance of the speech act.

Austin's theory of speech acts tends to be viewed first and foremost as a theory of language that aims to attack and replace logical positivist views on language and meaningfulness; the fact that this piece of philosophy of language provides a basis for revalidating ethics as a philosophical discipline is generally not paid due attention. However, Austin himself points out that the theory of speech acts gains its interest only from its implications for philosophy in general – for instance, from the fact that it allows a systematic approach to the study of such ordinary words as "good" (cf. Austin [1955] 1975a: 163). Isolated from its philosophical applications, Austin ([1955] 1975a: 164) admits, speech act theory "is bound to be a little boring and dry to listen to and digest"; but he wants to leave to his readers "the real fun of applying it in philosophy". Now, if we take proper account of the historical context of very far-reaching philosophical doctrines in which speech act theory makes its appearance, we will come to conceive of it as a critique of assumptions about language that serves to undermine a general philosophical position which rests on these assumptions: We can say that Austin's argument with his speech act theory, as presented in the William James

Lectures, is that the logical positivists' opinion that ethical statements and concepts are nonsensical is based on a wrong theory of language.

What I wish to maintain with my central thesis is that the case of Austin's speech act theory is closely paralleled by the case of Grice's theory of conversational implicature, except that the criticism incorporated in Grice's theory aims primarily at OLP, that is at his colleagues at Oxford, and at Wittgenstein II: Grice's argument with his theory, notably first presented in *his* William James lectures of 1967 (henceforth WJL), is that OLPers have frequently arrived at wrong philosophical conclusions due to a methodology that rests on a wrong (or, in some cases, missing) theory of language.

In order to illustrate Grice's argument, let me briefly return to the Oxonian conceptual analyst discussed in section 4 who argues against the definition of knowledge as justified true belief by pointing out that in ordinary discourse, "X believes that p" is used in situations where X does *not* know p, or at least where it is not clear that X knows p. On the theory of conversational implicature, the mere fact that ordinary speakers normally use "X believes that p" in situations where X does *not* know p, or at least where it is not clear that X knows p, does not allow one to conclude that they would consider it *incorrect in conceptual terms* to use it in a situation where it is clear that X knows that p (though they might regard it as incorrect in the sense of misleading). The theory allows for the possibility that when an ordinary speaker uses "X believes that p", he is (usually) taken to *imply* (or, in Grice's technical term, *implicate*) that X does not know p or that it is not clear that X knows p, while *what he says* would be considered by ordinary speakers as perfectly compatible with X's knowing that p.

So far, we could say, Grice's criticism of "orthodox" OxOLP-methodology is only negative: His argument is that the common OxOLP-practice – the practice of refuting philosophical theses about ordinary concepts by reference to the fact that an expression is normally used in situations where such-and-such conditions are fulfilled – is inadequate, because it rests on the false assumption that what deviates from ordinary usage is necessarily conceptually incorrect. However, Grice also shows how the test of philosophical theses against ordinary language can be amended: Relevant, according to Grice, is not ordinary *usage*, but ordinary speakers' *assessment of ordinary expressions in terms of truth or falsity*: what must be looked to is the ordinary speaker's explicit opinion on whether to use a certain expression in a certain situation would be to say something *true or false*. In the example of knowledge as a special case of belief, the analysis would be supported if ordinary speakers felt that the expression "X believes that p" is *true* in a situation where X knows that p, however misleading it might (usually) be to use the expression thus. On the other hand, the analysis would be in serious trouble if ordinary speakers felt that to say of someone who knows that p that he believes that p would indeed be to say something *false*, rather than just to be misleading.

In short, Grice's overall point is that "orthodox" OLPers have habitually committed the mistake of arguing from mere usage of ordinary expressions, rather than from ordinary speakers' assessment of their truth or falsity, and so have frequently arrived at significant, but wrong philosophical conclusions – conclusions about definitions of concepts, but also about the falsity or nonsensicality of metaphysical theses. Lecture 1 of the WJL (Grice 1989: ch. 1) gives numerous examples of this mistake on the part of such eminent OLPers as Wittgenstein, Austin and Strawson, and some of them we will encounter in the further course of my discussion.

What remains to be added here is that as a good ordinary language philosopher, Grice does not direct his criticism exclusively at his own people, but also lands a side blow at ILP: As we have seen, Frege and Carnap express strong reservations about ordinary language, considering its terms to be vague and misleading, and judging it to be inadequate as a notational system for logical inferences. It is a further corollary of Grice's theory that the terms of ordinary language might turn out to be just as semantically rigid and precise as those of the artificial ideal languages envisaged by ILPers, once we distinguish *what is said* from *what is implicated* in ordinary expressions: As Grice writes on one occasion, "if the requisite kind of purity [of an ideal scientific language] were to consist in what I might term such logico-methodological virtues as consistency and systematicity...what prevents us, in advance, from attributing these virtues to ordinary language?" (1986: 54). Indeed, a large part of the WJL is dedicated to proving the "logical virtues" of ordinary language with the help of the conceptual tools provided by the theory of conversational implicature.

I am finally in a position to answer the question asked at the beginning of this section, the question of where Grice belongs within language-analytic philosophy. The central fact to take account of here is that Grice, with his theory of conversational implicature, kills two philosophical birds with one stone: On the one hand, he formulates a criticism of the "orthodox" OLP-method of testing philosophical theses against ordinary language, a criticism that is explicit enough to show what has to be done if one wishes to improve, rather than abolish, this method. On the other hand, his theory opens the possibility that the alleged shortcomings of ordinary language ILPers have diagnosed are illusory, the ILP-programme of replacing ordinary language by artificial substitutes therefore largely obsolete. It is on this basis that I would propose characterizing Grice as an unordinary, or dissenting, ordinary language philosopher. As we shall see in the next section, there is more in Grice's work that corroborates such a characterization.

6. Grice and Oxonian ordinary language philosophy

Wittgenstein's influence on the Oxford philosophers is clearly visible in Austin's (1955) theory of speech acts, but even more conspicuous in the fact that OxOLPers agree with Wittgenstein II that *some* philosophical problems arise merely out of a misuse of language. Probably the best known Oxonian arguments of this sort come from Gilbert Ryle (1932, 1949), but they can also be found in texts by Austin. Since Austin is often viewed as the founding father of OxOLP, and especially because Grice in many ways is a close follower of his doctrines, we shall focus for the moment on what Austin has to say about philosophy and its methods.

Austin gives the most explicit account of his conception of philosophy in "A plea for excuses", which, according to the editors of his *Philosophical Papers*, first reached an audience as Presidential Address to the Aristotelian Society in 1956 (cf. Austin 1979: vi). In a first relevant passage, Austin ([1956] 1979: 181) presents his ideas about philosophical methodology: to use his method is to "proceed from 'ordinary language'"; that is, to "examin[e] what we should say when, and so why and what we should mean by it". Austin writes that such a method is "barely in need of justification"

– that if anything, what ought to be said about it is that its proper application requires great "care and thoroughness". Nevertheless, he does give a brief justification of it. He explains that "words are our [i. e. the philosopher's] tools, and, as a minimum, we should use clean tools: We should know what we mean and what we do not, and we must forearm ourselves against the traps that language sets us" (181-182). It is in this talk of linguistic traps that Wittgenstein's influence is most clearly recognizable. Indeed, Austin, in another paper ([1946] 1979: 86 f.), argues very much along Wittgensteinian lines against scepticism, by showing that the question the sceptic's thesis answers ("Is secure empirical knowledge possible?") could only be posed by someone who ignores how ordinary expressions such as "know" and "real" are used in ordinary discourse. Other than Wittgenstein, however, Austin seems to take the sceptic's claim (that secure empirical knowledge is impossible) seriously as a thesis about the ordinary concept of knowledge. Austin thus understands philosophy not to be exclusively self-therapeutic: The sceptic's question about knowledge arises only from philosophical abuse of ordinary language, but the question of what knowledge is is a genuine philosophical problem to Austin. And also in this latter domain of genuine philosophical problems, ordinary language use plays a crucial role in Austin's methodology: Ordinary language serves as a heuristic in conceptual analysis, it must have the "first word" ([1956] 1979: 185) in any conceptual enquiry. The best illustrations of the Austinian procedure of scrutinizing ordinary conceptual distinctions on the way to a philosophical theory can be found in his analyses (or, in the first case, rather the beginnings of an analysis) of the concepts of action and speech act (in Austin 1956 and 1955, respectively).¹³

The requirement that ordinary language should have the first word in conceptual analysis has so much come to be seen as the essential characteristic of Austin's methodology that it is often overlooked that Austin emphasizes just as much that ordinary language does not have the *last* word: "words are not...facts or things: we need therefore to prise them off the world, to hold them apart from and against it, so that we can realize their inadequacies and arbitrariness, and can re-look at the world without blinkers" ([1956] 1979: 182). Therefore, "[ordinary language] is *not* the last word: in principle it can everywhere be supplemented and improved upon and superseded. Only remember, it *is* the first word" (p. 185). To have brought to light the conceptual distinctions that are extractable from ordinary language use, then, is not yet to have arrived at clear and useful concepts. An example of ordinary language providing insufficiently precise distinctions can again be found in the area of speech acts (Austin [1955] 1975a: 123-124): Ordinary language suggests a dichotomy between actions performed *in* saying something, and actions performed *by* saying something. But further pondering on the phenomena leads to the conclusion that an adequate theory of speech acts requires a finer-grained distinction which subdivides the first category, actions done *in* saying something, into *locutionary* acts, *illocutionary* acts, and acts that should not be considered as speech acts proper (like breaking the law or running a risk in saying something).

A final point about Austin's conception of philosophy that I think is worth mentioning here concerns his view of science and its relation to philosophy. We have just seen that for instance in the analysis of the concept of speech act, Austin reaches a

¹³ And, incidentally, in Grice's (1957) analysis of the concept of meaning.

point where he leaves behind the distinctions derived from ordinary language use and starts to define technical concepts. Now, it would seem from some of the things Austin writes that he holds that at this stage where the analyst has exploited the distinctions of ordinary language and starts to introduce technical concepts, he takes the step from philosophy to science. Thus, in connection with his analysis of action, Austin remarks that

[i]n spite of the wide and acute observation of the phenomena of action embodied in ordinary speech, modern scientists have been able, it seems to me, to reveal its inadequacy at numerous points, if only because they have had access to more comprehensive data and have studied them with more catholic and dispassionate interest than the ordinary man.... (Austin [1956] 1979: 203)

Such passages as this make Austin appear as a certain type of naturalist who considers philosophy to be continuous with science, although the notion of science used here is perhaps a little odd and narrow (cf. also Passmore 1966: 455): On such a view, the transition from philosophy to (what I would call the theoretical or conceptual part of) science consists in the step from ordinary concepts to a fine-grained conceptual apparatus, each concept having a complete explicit definition. Science would thus build on the philosopher's investigation of folk-distinctions, which it revises and complements. Note that this conception would fit OLP-ideology as I sketched it in section 2, in that it gives primacy to ordinary concepts, rather than the systems of science: "ordinary wisdom" provides the ladder which the scientist *must* depend on if she is to climb up to superior conceptual frameworks, even if she may throw the ladder away once she has reached her privileged position. If my interpretation of Austin is correct, then he would probably have viewed his speech act theory as starting out as philosophy but ending, with its numerous technical terms, as a scientific theory.

Whereas for Austin, ordinary conceptual distinctions, though of fundamental importance, can be "superseded" if scientific investigation reveals their shortcomings, the work of other OxOLPers betrays a stronger anti-scientistic bias. An example is provided by an often cited argument from James O. Urmson (1956b: 121-122): Urmson takes offence at the remark in a popular science book that in the light of modern physics, it turns out that "desks are not really solid". According to Urmson, this can be refuted simply by pointing out that desks are just the kind of object to which the ordinary term "solid" standardly applies. Of course Urmson does not mean to object to the empirical insights about the physical properties of desks that the physicist tried to articulate with her statement; what bothers him is the implication that ordinary language is flawed in that it applies the concept of solidity to desks. In Urmson's view, there is a primary ordinary concept of solidity, which is defined by how the ordinary term expressing it is commonly used in ordinary language. The physicist is of course free to define her own concept of solidity, which will apply to different objects than its ordinary counterpart; but a perceived necessity to introduce such a technical concept within physical theory can in no way be a grounds for claiming that it is incorrect to apply the *ordinary* concept to desks.¹⁴

¹⁴ Grice never explicitly comments on Urmson's argument, but if he had, I suspect he would have tried to counterargue against both Urmson and the physicist's criticism of ordinary language, by

Now that I hope we have a somewhat clearer picture of what is involved in the methodology of OxOLP, it is time to turn to Grice's own comments on what he thinks philosophy is and how it should proceed. His most explicit statement on philosophical method is "Postwar Oxford philosophy" of 1958 (included in Grice 1989 as ch. 10), where he postulates two central tenets that he says underlie his philosophy.¹⁵ The first would seem to be just a restatement of Austin's instruction to the philosopher to use ordinary language as a heuristic in doing conceptual analysis:

(1) It is, in my view, an important part, though by no means the whole, of the philosopher's task to analyze, describe, or characterize...the ordinary use or uses of certain expressions or classes of expressions. If I philosophize about the notion of cause, or about perception, or about knowledge and belief, I expect to find myself considering, among other things, in what sort of situations we should, in our ordinary talk, be willing to speak (or again be unwilling to speak) of something as causing something else to happen; or again of someone as seeing a tree; or again of someone knowing rather than merely believing that something is the case.... Such linguistic facts, or at least the answers to the question why these are linguistic facts, may be of philosophical importance. (Grice [1958] 1989: 172)

The second tenet echoes Austin's treatment of the sceptic's thesis, and the argument from Urmson just discussed:

(2) It is in my view the case that a philosophical thesis which involves the rejection as false, or absurd, or linguistically incorrect, of some class of statements which would ordinarily be made, and accepted as true, in specifiable types of situation is itself almost certain (perhaps quite certain) to be false.... If, for example, a philosopher advances a philosophical argument to show that we do not in fact ever see trees and books and human bodies, despite the fact that in a variety of familiar situations we would ordinarily say that we do, then our philosopher is almost (perhaps quite) certainly wrong. (ibid.)

Note that Grice here seems to attribute (near) falsificatory power to ordinary *usage*. Two pages later, Grice gives a description of conceptual analysis that reinforces this impression, in that he appears to equate the analysis of a concept with describing the ordinary use of the term that expresses the concept:

demonstrating that the ordinary concept of solidity is not what ordinary language use suggests it is; that although the statement that desks are solid is commonly made in ordinary language, speakers, on reflection, perhaps would admit on any occasion of use that their statement is in fact false. The ordinary concept of solidity would thus indeed turn out to be inapplicable to such objects as desks, and in so far to be much closer to the physicist's technical concept (if not identical with it!) than superficial facts of language use suggest. Cf. in this connection Grice's (1987: 380) condescending remark on "Urmson's treatment of Paradigm Case Arguments", where he stresses that just because some statement is commonly made by ordinary speakers, this does not exclude the possibility that on reflection, they might recognize it to be false.

¹⁵ Grice ([1958] 1989: 171) remarks that he is only speaking for himself, but that colleagues "both in and out of Oxford" might share his opinions.

To be looking for a conceptual analysis of a given expression E is...to be looking for a general characterization of the types of case in which one would apply E rather than withhold it.... [T]he characteristic procedure is to think up a possible general characterization of one's use of E and then to test it by trying to find or imagine a particular situation which fits the suggested characterization and yet would not be a situation in which one would apply E. If one fails, after careful consideration on these lines, to find any such situation, then one is more or less confident that the suggested characterization of the use of E is satisfactory. (Grice [1958] 1989: 174)

Judging from these statements, one would think that at the time of writing, Grice held that ordinary *usage* alone was relevant for conceptual analysis and philosophical theses about concepts; so the idea that philosophical conclusions should not be based on mere usage of ordinary expressions – which I claimed, in section 5, to be the central methodological point of the theory of conversational implicature – must have occurred to him only later. This, however, would be rather odd, given that Grice had been developing his ideas around the concept of implicature at least since the early 1950s.¹⁶ Indeed, there are strong indications that already long before "Postwar Oxford philosophy", Grice would have emphasized that we should be prudent in basing our philosophical conclusions on usage pure and simple. My basis for claiming this are the two essays "Common sense and skepticism" and "G.E. Moore on philosopher's paradoxes" (chs. 8 and 9 of Grice 1989), which go back to the years 1946 and 1953 respectively. In these papers, Grice refutes a philosophical argument from his fellow OxOLPer Norman Malcolm (1942), by demonstrating that it rests on a false assumption about what it means for an ordinary expression to be ordinarily used. Let me briefly present here Malcolm's argument along with Grice's counterargument to it:

Malcolm, like so many OxOLPers before and after him, is preoccupied with the problem of scepticism. His intention is to refute scepticism by showing that the sceptic's thesis "goes against ordinary language" (a strategy that he incidentally claims underlies the common sense-methodology of Wittgenstein's colleague and predecessor at Cambridge, George E. Moore). Malcolm (cf. 1942: 112) departs from the following formulation of the sceptic's thesis:

For all empirical propositions p (e. g. "There is cheese on the table"), we cannot ever know for certain that p.

Now, various OLPers have envisaged different strategies to tackle this thesis: One could understand the sceptic to be using the term "know" in its ordinary sense in stating his thesis, and then argue that the sceptic – like Urmson's physicist with 'solidity' – falsely claims that it is incorrect to apply the ordinary concept of knowledge to empirical propositions. Another strategy would be to understand the sceptic to be using the term "know" in a non-ordinary sense – in which case his thesis remains vacuous as long as the new technical meaning is not explained. Or, finally, one could take him to be using

¹⁶ Strawson, in his *Introduction to Logical Theory* of 1952 (Strawson 1952: 179, n. 1), considers the possibility that what he treats as *presuppositions* might result from "a general rule of linguistic conduct" – a predecessor of Grice's conversational maxims – whose existence "was first pointed out to me, in different connexion, by Mr. H.P. Grice".

the term "know" in the ordinary sense, but to be making the entirely unmotivated suggestion that the usage of the ordinary term be changed. Grice (1989: 149) ironically remarks that philosophers proposing the latter two strategies are "paying a charitable tribute to the perspicacity of their Skeptical colleagues.... I do not think Skeptics would be very happy about either of these interpretations of their intentions". For Grice, the only feasible interpretation of the sceptic is the first one, which is the one adopted by Malcolm. This is Malcolm's argument (cf. Malcolm 1942: 118 f.):

(P1) The sceptic's claim amounts to holding that statements of the form "I know for certain that p" (where p is an empirical proposition) are incorrect in the sense of 'self-contradictory'.

Malcolm justifies this first premise as follows: The sceptic claims that we cannot ever say correctly "I know for certain that p", where p is an empirical proposition; for example, we cannot ever say correctly "I know for certain that there is cheese on the table". Now, whereas Urmson's physicist thought she had *empirical evidence* for her claim that the ordinary concept of solidity does not apply to desks (while she had such evidence only for the claim that the *technical* concept does not apply), in this case here, empirical evidence is entirely irrelevant to the claim: the sceptic will insist that it is incorrect of a speaker to say "I know for certain that there is cheese on the table" even after all possible measures have been taken to make sure that the speaker is awake and sober, and that the cheese is real cheese. Therefore, the sceptic cannot mean by his thesis that to say "I know for certain that there is cheese on the table" is always *empirically false*. Rather, what he seems to mean is that to say "I know for certain that there is cheese on the table" is *self-contradictory*.

(P2) Everyone, including sceptics, will agree that statements of the form "I know for certain that p" would ordinarily be called "ordinarily used expressions".

(P3) By "ordinarily used expressions", one ordinarily means 'expressions that are used to describe a certain situation'.

(P4) But those expressions that we ordinarily call "self-contradictory" could never be used to describe a situation. They thus cannot be "ordinary expressions". (Certainly, there are expressions that *appear* to be self-contradictory and that *are* used descriptively: for instance, the expression "It is and it isn't" could be used descriptively as an answer to the question whether it is raining, when there is only a slight drizzle; however, these we would not call "self-contradictory" (cf. Malcolm 1942: 119).)

From these premises, Malcolm concludes that

(C) The sceptic's stance – to hold that statements of the form "I know that p" are self-contradictory, while agreeing that they have an ordinary use – is itself self-contradictory.

Note that while Urmson takes it for granted that the mere fact that "Desks are solid" is an ordinarily used expression proves the correctness of applying the ordinary concept of

solidity to desks, Malcolm is more cautious: He gives an explicit argument (P3-P4) for the assumption that the fact that "X knows that p" is an ordinarily used expression proves that it cannot be self-contradictory to apply the ordinary concept of knowledge to empirical propositions.

The first step Grice ([1946] 1989: 150, [1953] 1989: 163) takes in replying to Malcolm is to undermine (P3) by showing that there are *two* ordinary concepts or senses of "ordinarily used expression": The first is the one adduced by Malcolm, which excludes self-contradictory expressions. In this sense of "ordinarily used expression" ('expressions that are used to describe a certain situation'), indeed, self-contradictory statements have no ordinary use. However, facts of ordinary language use indicate that there is a second concept or sense of "ordinarily used expression": There are, namely, occasions where ordinary speakers *do* use expressions that we would call self-contradictory to describe situations (although they may not *succeed* in describing them by using these expressions): For example, a chicken farmer, surveying the performance of his hens, might say "there are eight lots here, each containing eight eggs; so there are sixty-two eggs". In this sense ('expressions which are intended to be used descriptively, though perhaps unsuccessfully so'), Grice concludes, self-contradictory expressions *can* be "ordinarily used expressions".

So far, Grice has only shown that Malcolm's counterargument to the sceptic is based on a wrong analysis of the concept 'ordinarily used expression': Malcolm wrongly assumes that ordinarily used expressions cannot be self-contradictory; but on the correct analysis of the concept 'ordinarily used expression', it turns out that self-contradictory expressions *can* fall under the concept. Now, let us see what possibilities Grice envisages for supporting the sceptic. What the sceptic can do now is to maintain that "I know for certain that p" is an "ordinarily used expression" in the sense of 'an expression which is intended to be used descriptively, though unsuccessfully so'. Grice ([1946] 1989: 150) hypothesizes that on reflection, and given certain instructive arguments, ordinary speakers would indeed admit on any occasion of use of the expression "I know for certain that p" that their statement does not, and perhaps could not ever, represent facts correctly. The arguments Grice envisages would require of the speaker a consideration of certain facts about ordinary language use – for example the oddness of "I know p but I might have had better evidence for p", a statement that must be accepted as correct by anyone who applies "I know that..." to an empirical proposition. Grice thus manages to present a range of arguments from ordinary language *in favour* of scepticism. The conclusion is obvious: If ordinary speakers generally find these arguments convincing, it is shown that the ordinary idea of what knowledge is is not what it appears to be from superficial language use, and is in fact perfectly compatible with scepticism.

The strong reservation about arguing from superficial facts about ordinary language use that is expressed in Grice's counterargument to Malcolm is, strangely, not made as perspicuous in Grice's "Postwar Oxford philosophy" as one might expect, but I think that it does shine through in two details of the passages I cited above (cf. p. 26-27), as the attentive reader actually may have noted: namely, in the first quote, what Grice considers to be "of philosophical importance" are not the facts about usage alone, but *the answers to the question why these facts are facts*; and according to the second quote, it is not when a statement is ordinarily made, but only when it is ordinarily made *and accepted as true*, that the validity of a philosophical thesis that rejects this statement

as false or incorrect is questioned. Thus, it is a fact of linguistic behaviour that we commonly use "I know that..." with empirical propositions; but before concluding anything from this, we must provide "answers to the question why" this is a fact: That we give a true description of a situation with the expression is one possible answer, but in this case perhaps a false one; it might be that we only *intend* to describe a situation with an expression that is in fact self-contradictory.

The general moral of both Grice's reply to Malcolm and the theory of conversational implicature is that we cannot reject a proposed conceptual analysis or philosophical thesis on the basis of mere observations about ordinary usage: "I know that p" is a commonly used ordinary expression, but that does not necessarily exclude that it might, on reflection, turn out to be self-contradictory in the view of ordinary speakers. Similarly, "X believes that p" is ordinarily used in situations where X does not know p, or where it is not clear that X knows p, but that does not necessarily exclude that ordinary language users might consider it true to say of someone who knows that p that he believes that p. If we are to test our philosophical theses against ordinary language, we require a closer analysis of the linguistic facts – an "explanation", if you will, of why "I know that p" is a commonly used ordinary expression, and why "X believes that p" is used in situations where X does not know p, or where it is not clear that X knows p. On such analysis, it may turn out that "I know that p" is one of those ordinarily used expressions that are *intended* to be used descriptively, but are in fact self-contradictory; and it may turn out that 'X does not know p', or 'It is not clear that X knows p', are *implicatures* that are (usually) carried by "X believes that p", while *what is said* in it is compatible with X's knowing that p. As Grice puts it, "[b]efore we rush ahead to exploit the linguistic nuances which we have detected, we should make sure that we are reasonably clear what sort of nuances they are" ([1961] 1989: 237). The point is restated in his biographical retrospective, when he says that "my work on the idea of Conversational Implicature... emphasized the radical importance of distinguishing (to speak loosely) what *our words* say or imply from what *we* in uttering them imply; a distinction seemingly denied by Wittgenstein, and all too frequently ignored by Austin" (1986: 59).

While the two latter quotes nicely document Grice's impatience with fellow OLPers who fail to secure their arguments from ordinary language with a proper theoretical foundation, Grice keeps emphasizing that he is thoroughly committed to the view that ordinary language provides "an indispensable foundation for much of the most fundamental kind of philosophizing" (1986: 58). As already indicated in section 5, he is not a promoter of the view that ordinary terms are so vague and illogical that they must be replaced by technical concepts that can be spelt out in ideal, artificial languages. It is always his objective to demonstrate that apparently artificial concepts that at first glance seem to "go against ordinary language" – be they concepts appearing in metaphysical theses, scientific theories, or formal logic – turn out not to do so on a correct analysis of the linguistic facts, carried out with the appropriate conceptual tools. We have seen in this section how Grice, in two early papers, shows that once facts about usage are analysed with the appropriate conceptual tools, the ordinary concept of knowledge turns out to be compatible with scepticism. In later papers, Grice demonstrates that on an analysis of facts about usage with the means provided by his theory of conversational implicature, our ordinary concept of perception turns out to be compatible with an intricate and technical-looking philosophical theory of perception (Grice 1961), and the

logical words of ordinary language turn out to correspond to the logical functors as they are defined in standard formal logic (Grice 1961, Lectures 3 and 4 of the WJL, Grice 1981). Considering this basic Gricean line of argument – the demonstration that ordinary language is in harmony with the most sophisticated theories and theses put forward by philosophers, logicians and scientists – Grice, I think, should be viewed as an ordinary language philosopher in the best sense of the term: A true advocate of ordinary language and its concepts, eager to prove that whenever a scientist or philosopher thinks he is proposing a conceptual innovation, the ordinary man, with his ordinary conceptual apparatus, is always already ahead, waiting for him to catch up.

Conclusion

My objective with this paper was to engender in the reader my own conviction that Grice's theory of conversational implicature cannot be properly understood and assessed without taking into account the consequences Grice intended it to have on philosophical methodologies and doctrines current at the time of its first appearance. These consequences are the following:

First, on the theory of conversational implicature, "orthodox" OLP-methodology is flawed: This methodology assumes that the fact that some expression is commonly used, or is commonly used in such-and-such situations, is enough to falsify or qualify as absurd a thesis about an ordinary concept that involves a rejection of, or a deviation from this usage. But decisive for conclusions about ordinary concepts is not the fact that ordinary speakers commonly use a certain expression, or use it in such-and-such situations; what counts is *what they say* with the expression. If this is appreciated, many specific claims by OLPers about ordinary concepts can be seen to be wrong.

Second, on the theory of conversational implicature, the ILPer's conviction that ordinary language is logically defective, vague, and metaphysically contaminated, and must therefore be replaced by artificial substitutes, is called into question. Again, once what is said in ordinary expressions is separated from what is implicated in them, many specific claims by ILPers about illogicalities and other kinds of inadequacies of ordinary terms are revealed to be false.

If one takes proper account of these (potential) consequences of the theory of conversational implicature, one recognizes that by introducing it, Grice, with one sweep of hand, dissociated himself from both basic doctrines within the overall language-analytic movement of 20th century philosophy. In the ideological terms of section 1, his position could perhaps be characterized as follows: To the ILPer, Grice put it that the ordinary view of the world as it manifests itself in ordinary language is not as inadequate or naive on scientific standards as one might think. With the OLPPer, Grice agreed on the primacy of ordinary concepts, but pointed out to him that ordinary wisdom is in no need of being defended as some sort of moral stronghold against possible incursions from metaphysics or science; for the proposal to define pain as electrical impulses in nerve cells, the metaphysician's thesis that "I know that there is cheese on the table" is a self-contradictory expression (this thesis being taken as a conceptual proposal about the definition of knowledge), or the logician's replacement of the ordinary "if... then..." by material implication – all proposals that seem so much at odds with ordinary wisdom at first glance – may actually add nothing to the way in

which the man in the street has already been thinking anyway. Thus did Grice oppose those who regarded ordinary language as simplistic, as well as those who considered the ordinary man's view of the world as a kind of moral last resort that must be cultivated alongside science and be safeguarded against imminent metaphysical shattering. By demonstrating the sophistication and versatility of ordinary language, Grice refuted both these standpoints and took up the cudgels for ordinary wisdom more than any ordinary language philosopher had ever done before him.

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