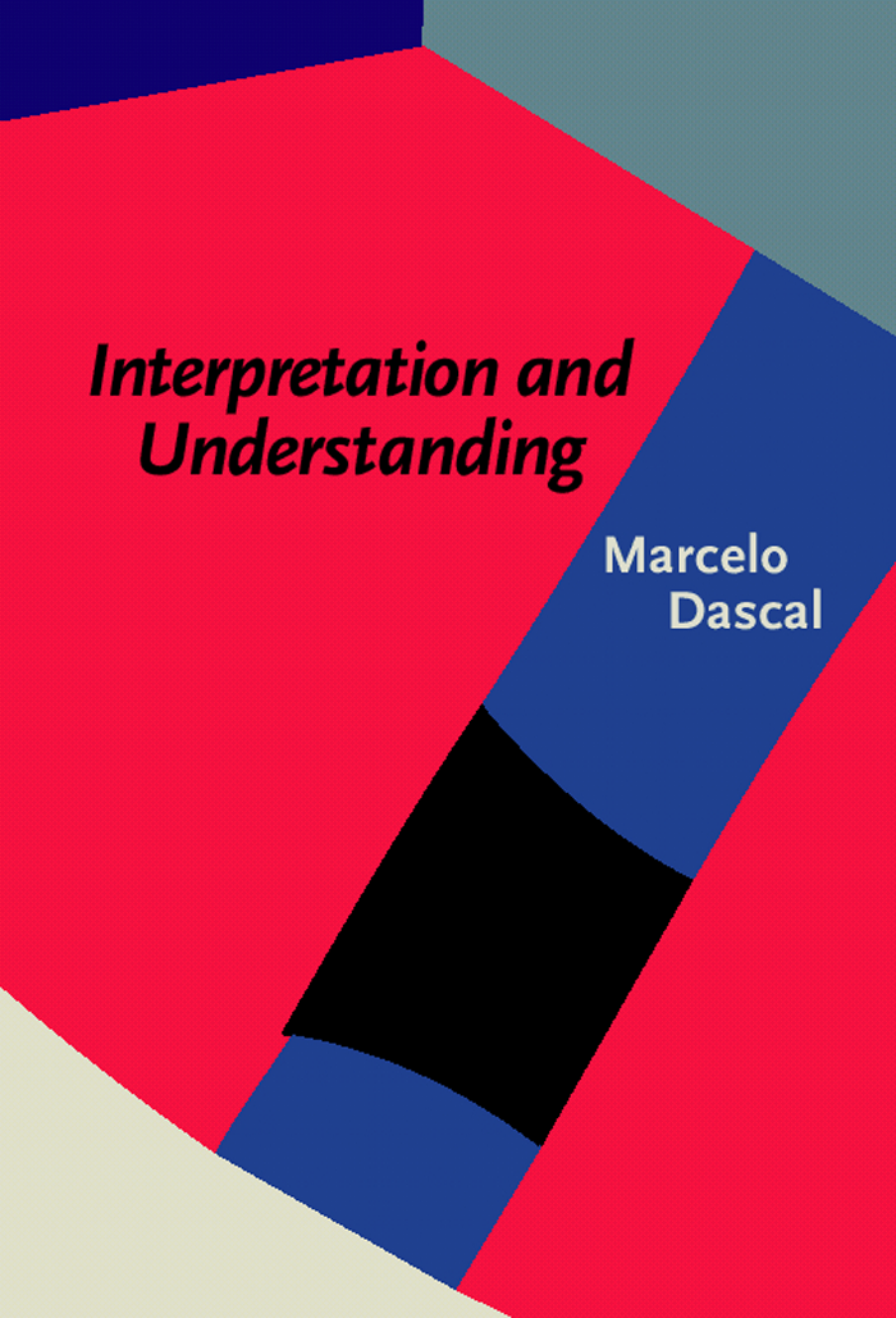
Interpretation and Understanding

Marcelo Dascal



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Foreword

Our species has been hunting for meaning ever since we departed from our cousins in the evolutionary tree. The child revels in recognizing — behind the sheer stimulus — a familiar face; the adolescent suffers in his search for a pattern capable of defining her self-identity; the adult is forever seeking the meaning of his life; and in old age one desperately tries to understand death. Throughout these endeavors we are lucky (as compared to other animals) to be able to share the articulate experience of our fellows through sophisticated forms of communication. Yet, alas, we quickly learn that our means of communication, as much as they can convey meaning and foster understanding, can also hide meaning and prevent comprehension. For we can never be sure that a smile indicates pleasure, that a "yes" conveys assent, or that an assertion reveals the speaker's belief. In order to ascertain what such examples of communicative behavior "mean", we have to go through an elaborate process of interpretation, taking into account not only that specific portion of behavior, but nearly all we know about the person, the particular situation where the behavior is produced, the social norms regulating such forms of behavior — in short, virtually the entire 'world' we supposedly share with our interlocutor. In the face of the complexity of this interpretative process, it is rather miraculous that we succeed in understanding each other more often than not. The task of a theory of understanding and interpretation is to attempt to clarify the principles through which we achieve this daily miracle. It is to this task that this book is devoted.

Since understanding and interpretation span over all our activities, an adequate theory of these capacities cannot remain confined to narrow disciplinary boundaries. Historically, due to the fact that language is our most perspicuous instrument of communication and understanding, the discipline of pragmatics, whose object is to study interpretation and understanding, has developed in connection with the language-oriented disciplines: linguistics, philosophy of language, rhetoric, theory of literature. But it has outgrown these limits, as indicated by some of the chapters of this book, where, among other things, legal practice, artificial intelligence, psychoanalysis, anthropology, art, and politics are discussed. Though the "hard core" of the account of interpretation and understanding here presented stems from pragmatics — the theory of language use — the book addresses both specialists in the

language disciplines and the wider audience comprising researchers in other areas as well as anyone interested in understanding the ubiquitous processes of understanding and interpretation.

The book's basic claim is fairly simple: human communication essentially involves the ability to use semiotic means (such as language) to convey one's "communicative intentions" and the ability to recognize such intentions. My purpose is to analyze the variety of circumstances in which these abilities are put to use successfully and the mechanisms and principles through which this is achieved. Special emphasis is devoted to cases in which the odds seem to be against communicative success (i.e., proper understanding and appropriate interpretation), as when people actually say one thing while intending to communicate quite a different thing.

The essays here collected represent my work in the pragmatics of communication or "sociopragmatics", performed roughly during the decade since the publication in 1983 of *Thought in Language*, the first volume of my *Pragmatics and the Philosophy of Mind*. I say "roughly" because it contains also some essays written before 1983, which either did not find their expression in that book or became worth reproducing because of their interest as independent reference sources, as well as some essays written after 1993. Not included here are those pieces of my work that belong to "psychopragmatics" and those dealing with the analysis of a sociopragmatic (and to some extent also psychopragmatic) phenomenon that I consider of fundamental importance — controversies. Both will be published in separate volumes. Nevertheless, examples of what these two other areas of my research in pragmatics are concerned with can be found in Chapters 13, 16 and 18.

As a whole, I develop here what might be called an account of communication that is essentially "Gricean" in nature. Whatever "neo-Gricean" innovations this account may offer lie in (a) dealing with some problems in the Gricean framework, exploring additional notions required by an account of this type, connecting the two main strands ("semantic" and "pragmatic") in Grice's work, and trying to provide for a unified philosophical and linguistic base; (b) applying the resulting apparatus to a range of communicative phenomena broader than that envisaged by Grice, and thereby using such applications to serve as indicators of the required theoretical modifications; and (c) comparing this approach to communication with others (not *all* others), thereby clarifying it further and showing its specificity, defensibility against its

critics, and productivity. The three parts in which the essays are organized correspond roughly to these three lines.

As a rule, overlapping and redundancy — which are essential components of all communication, necessary for both interpretation and understanding — have not been systematically eliminated. Pragmatically, every reformulation brings with it a new nuance of intended meaning, and even sheer repetition shows the importance the author assigns to some idea. Cross-references linking the chapters of the book, as well as the index, serve as useful indicators of their interconnections. Collecting, selecting, and organizing these essays and enclosing them between the front and back cover of a volume in fact revealed to the author himself how what seemed at the time of their composition to be rather isolated pieces of work, motivated by specific interests and circumstances, were in fact pieces of an evolving research program that this book reveals. Maybe some unconscious "design" guided him in producing each of the pieces, but certainly no prior global "communicative intention" to which the specific communicative aim of each essay was subordinated. To discover this *ex post facto* is surprising, pleasing, and rewarding — for the author as well as for the reader, I trust. For both, it adds new layers or dimensions of understanding of the material at hand, ranging from unsuspected connections to comprehensive self-understanding. This Foreword should not deprive the reader from the pleasure inherent to this activity of understanding and interpreting. It will only briefly try to facilitate it.

Chapter 1, "Pragmatics and communicative intentions", functions as a general introduction. It summarizes some of the points made in the 1983 book as well as in later chapters, notably the criterion for a definition of pragmatics, the semantic-pragmatics distinction and complementary relationship, and the dual role of the context. It then links between the two strands of Grice's inquiries into meaning and puts forth the ontological thesis that pragmatics has a specific and well defined domain of "objects" to investigate, namely, "communicative intentions".

Chapter 2, "Conversational relevance", is perhaps the earliest study, after Grice, devoted to the notion of relevance in pragmatics. It analyzes the nature and varieties of this notion and what is required in order to flesh out Grice's sketchy account of how the flouting of his "maxim of relevance" can generate implicatures. Among other things, it stresses the relational character of relevance and introduces the important notion of "conversational demand" as that to which an utterance must be evaluated as relevant. The chapter also

argues that implicatures are generated as reasonable interpretative hypotheses only if other, simpler explanations of a presumed irrelevance — such as failure of attention, misunderstanding or causal explanations — are ruled out.

Leaving aside — at least at the outset — pragmatics, Chapter 3, "Strategies of understanding", explores first the problems involved in understanding the phenomenon of understanding itself, in its most general sense. Language and language use, however, are soon seen to occupy central stage in this inquiry, both as posing difficulties to be overcome and as suggesting strategies to overcome these difficulties. By pursuing these strategies and simultaneously reflecting about them, several philosophical, psychological and linguistic accounts of understanding are examined, and the discussion progressively focuses on the relationship between theory of meaning and theory of understanding. Their identification is rejected, and another form of connection between them is argued for, where pragmatics is called upon to play a distinctive role, alongside semantics. The last section of the paper makes use of a powerful strategy of understanding, namely, instantiation, whose convincing *use* in one example is assumed to require no additional reflection or comment.

The following chapter, "Two modes of understanding", continues the discussion at the point where the preceding chapter left it. It does so by distinguishing two kinds of understanding involved in inter-personal communication, rule-based "comprehending" and intuitive-direct "grasping". The chapter describes and illustrates their characteristics and shows how they are complementarily involved in successful communication. The absence of grasping can be seen as one significant source of misunderstanding, quite different from the absence of comprehending (Chapter 14). The notion of grasping regards a deeper form of inter-personal relationship, an "understanding the person" that is necessary for, but not equivalent to understanding the person's communicative acts. In this respect, the grasping/comprehending distinction parallels (but is not identical to) that between *Verständigung* and *Verstehen*, which plays a central role in theories concerned with the interpersonal ethics of communication, such as Habermas's (e.g., 1998, 2001). This chapter also introduces a minimalist, though powerful, conception of the ethics of communication — which comprises (a) the duty of understanding and (b) the duty of making oneself understood (to which one should add (c) the principle that the effort of understanding should be fairly distributed

between the interlocutors) — wherein the role of both grasping and comprehending is elucidated.

Chapter 5, "Individual and collective intentions", contributes to the clarification of what communicative intentions are (Chapter 1) by looking into the more general problem of intentions as an essential component of all kinds of action, including communicative action. Of particular significance for communication is the notion of "collective action", for communication is always a collective enterprise, requiring the coordination of the individual contributions and the fulfillment of the respective communicative duties by at least two interlocutors. After attempting to develop a concept of collective intention based on the combination of individual intentions, the chapter concludes that this may not be possible at all. The implication for communicative intentions would be perhaps to question the standard assumption that they are, first and foremost, mental states of individual agents, admitting that they may be formed through and express the interaction of a multiplicity of "inner voices" coordinated (or not) in different ways — just as the paper shows collective action to be.

Chapter 6, "How does a connective work?", addresses a quite specific problem: the explanation of the meaning(s) of the two Hebrew connectives 'aval' (German 'aber', Spanish 'pero') and 'ela' (German 'sondern', Spanish 'sino'), both rendered in English by 'but', in French by 'mais', and in Portuguese by 'mas'. This specific problem leads, in a typical bottom-up explanatory drive, to the elaboration of a very general framework — the "Onion Model" of the significance of an utterance. This model posits that utterances convey a hierarchically ordered set of 'layers of meaning', ranging from 'an inner core' of propositional content to and 'outer' shell of conversational implicature, through intermediary layers such as presupposition, modality, illocutionary force, etc. It explains the function of 'aval' and 'ela' in terms of the cleavages these connectives introduce between layers of meaning or between the sub-layers within a given layer. In addition to providing a solution for the initial problem that motivated it, the model contributes to clarifying the semantics-pragmatics inter-relations and can be employed in accounting for other pragmatic phenomena (Chapters 7, 10 and 14b). It remains, to this day, a useful conceptual tool in the pragmatic-semantic toolkit.

Chapter 7 tackles the important notion of speaker's commitment and proposes to split it into two kinds, the one — 'commitment' — a yes/no concept, the other — 'involvement' — a degree concept. The former is bound

by social and linguistic rules that express the 'conventional' relation a speaker holds with the form of speech he uses and with the kind of communicative interaction taking place. The latter refers to what such rules do not — and presumably cannot — prescribe, namely the actual *engagement* a speaker entertains vis-à-vis his speech and his interlocutors. The distinction proposed parallels to some extent the distinction between 'comprehending' and 'grasping' (Chapter 4). It helps to spell out the different varieties of what linguists, sociologists and philosophers have indiscriminately called either 'commitment' or 'involvement', and suggests a way to characterize the different roles speakers have in communication.

Chapter 8, "Cues, clues, and context", addresses the thorny problem of context. It elaborates the idea (Dascal 1983; see also Chapter 1) of distinguishing two major roles of context in the process of interpretation: a more semantic one in nature — the 'gap-filling' function; and a decidedly pragmatic one — the mismatch-resolution function. The chapter further distinguishes between the two stages of the interpretation process, the detection of an "interpretation problem" and the search for a solution to the detected problem. The former is signaled by what we call 'cues' and the latter is performed with the help of 'clues'. Context plays a role, albeit different, in both stages. In order to show how, a systematic taxonomy of types of contexts, which generalizes and elaborates the traditional con-text / co-text distinction, is proposed and its workings are illustrated in detail, both in 8a and 8b.

In Chapter 9, "Models of interpretation", the nature of pragmatic interpretation is further clarified and specified by comparing it to other kinds of interpretation. By charting the assumptions underlying several 'models of interpretation' — such as the 'cryptographic', the 'hermeneutic', the 'super-pragmatic', the 'deep-structure', the 'radical interpretation' *and* the 'pragmatic' models — it is possible to identify quite precisely, I think, the niche occupied by the latter, and to resist imperialistic attempts by the others to occupy it.

As we shift to Part 2, it would be a mistake to expect that we are on pure empirical or practical terrain, from which theorizing is entirely absent. This becomes apparent already with the first chapter of this part, devoted to the phenomenon of digressions. Not only is this phenomenon essentially linked with the theoretical central notion of discourse coherence; it is also connected to other key semantic and/or pragmatic concepts such as "topic", "involvement" and "relevance". Using a variety of notions (some borrowed from other

disciplines such as phenomenology), this chapter in fact contributes both to an elucidation of the particular phenomenon it addresses (among other things it provides a set of distinctions that lead to a systematic classification of digressions) and of the relevant theoretical concepts through their application to a particular phenomenon — which is how, ideally, theoretical *cum* practical understanding grows.

Chapter 11 applies the pragmatic framework along with recent work on metaphors to the analysis of a metaphor that plays a key role in the conceptualization of and the discourse about the dynamics of theoretical change. Expressions such as 'beyond X' project onto the abstract domain of theories the spatial relations obtaining between a "landmark" (X) that has to be circumvented or otherwise overcome in order to let one reach a "target" from which one is separated by X. When X is a dominating theory, it is seen as obstructing the way to progress — which requires it to be thoroughly criticized before one can sketch out the alternative envisaged (the target). This analysis accounts for the argumentative structure of 'beyond X' texts, as well as for many other aspects of the conception of intellectual progress as involving freeing ourselves from prior limitations and imperfections (the "critical component"), and transcending them towards something seen by their authors as better (the "hope component"), albeit still rather vaguely.

"Three remarks on pragmatics and literature", Chapter 12 — again through a particular example — focuses on the difficulties and hopes of interdisciplinary adventures. It sketches the problems, tasks, mutual benefits, and prospects of a truly interdisciplinary cooperation between pragmatics and the theory of literature — a must that has not been so far fulfilled.

Chapter 13, "Understanding controversies", undertakes to analyze the phenomenon of polemical exchanges with the tools of (conversational) pragmatics. The fact that such exchanges are conflictual rather than cooperative forms of communication notwithstanding, pragmatic analysis proves to be quite rewarding. The chapter focuses especially on the remarkable presence of claims of misunderstanding in such exchanges, claims that, in general, do not correspond to actual misunderstandings. It suggests that such a *use* of misunderstanding allegations may be an argumentative strategy derived from the particular structure of a polemic exchange, where the contenders have to perform critical as well as defensive "duties".

Misunderstanding is a phenomenon as important or perhaps more important than understanding for a theory of communication. Chapter 14 is

devoted to this phenomenon. The questions that its study should raise and deal with are formulated, in different ways, in its two sub-chapters. A significant part of 14a is devoted to the discussion of the thesis put forth by Taylor (1992), according to which theories of misunderstanding (as well as of understanding, for that matter) are generated and justified through a rhetorical device akin to a would-be controversy. It is against the largely fictional figure of a "stubborn communicational skeptic" who doubts that understanding ever occurs, that "the communication theorist" feels the urge to develop a "theory" of misunderstanding and understanding, which is neither needed nor better than the commonsense beliefs that underlie the everyday practice of communication. Although rhetorically well put, this thesis has some problems which are indicated. The relevance and need for a special account of a variety of types of misunderstanding, as well as an outline of how such an account enriches pragmatics and can be integrated in its framework are provided in 14b.

Chapter 15 is an example of interdisciplinary cooperation that attempts to combine the concerns of pragmatics and legal thought regarding the notion of interpretation. Both of its parts demonstrate how much each of the partners in a true interdisciplinary endeavor actually gain from such a cooperation, provided they are ready to let their joint insights eventually modify their most entrenched dogmas. In 15a, the traditional doctrine that restricts the scope of legal interpretation to "that which is not clear" is called into question in view of the pragmatic distinction between 'transparency' and 'indirectness' and the consequent acknowledgment that even 'transparent' utterances need in fact undergo a process of pragmatic interpretation. This allows 'clarity' to be interpreted as a pragmatic — i.e., context-dependent — concept, to be equated with 'transparency', whereas the traditional legal notion of interpretation arising as a result of lack of clarity is accountable for either as pragmatic 'indirectness' or as semantic (contextually 'completed') 'utterance meaning' (see Chapter 1). The pragmatic framework, in its turn, is enriched substantially once the specific kinds of situations and factors that are directly relevant to legal interpretation — such as the distinction between application vs. systematization of the law — are taken into account, for each has its own constraints concerning the amount of transparency (or doubt) required (or allowed). The consideration of the fuzzy dimension of legal (and natural) language is also an important addition to the pragmatic framework.

In 15b, the preceding chapter's endeavor is pursued by exploring the legal fiction of a 'rational lawmaker'. This character is distinguished from the historical and the actual lawmakers — which permits to render more explicit the assumptions underlying the different 'ideologies' of legal interpretation. The philosophical situation of 'radical interpretation' (see Chapter 9) provides principles that can be adapted to characterize the figure of the 'rational law-interpreter'. The latter, in its turn, is the purported addressee of the rational lawmaker's 'utterances' (i.e., laws), that is, the audience towards which he must fulfill his/her 'duty to make himself/herself understood' (see Chapter 4). While this idealized situation of communication spells out usual assumptions in legal interpretation, it also permits to specify more precisely the pragmatic assumption of rationality involved in all forms of communication and provides a methodological basis for incorporating into the pragmatic model those features through which actual types of communication diverge from the model's idealization.

Chapter 16 offers a pragmatic account of the interpretation and understanding of jokes and dreams. Taking advantage of Freud's comparison between 'joke-work' and 'dream-work', this chapter explores the differences in language use in a typically social phenomenon such as jokes and in a typically asocial phenomenon such as dreams. The chapter inquires whether in the latter there are psychopragmatic constraints analogous to the sociopragmatic constraints operative in the former, and conjectures what they might possibly be.

In Chapter 17, the philosophical distinction between propositional knowledge (knowing-that) and the knowledge embedded in a skill (knowing-how) is applied to the phenomenon of understanding art. It is argued that the latter notion can be viewed as responsible for the cognitive aspects of this phenomenon — a move that permits to avoid the dilemma that opposes strict cognitivism to full-blooded emotivism. The results of a pilot experiment concerning the 'understanding' of classical, expressive, and abstract dance performances supporting the hypothesis put forth in this chapter are briefly reported.

The self-imposed limitations of Artificial Intelligence regarding language understanding are discussed in Chapter 18. It is shown that standard AI models overlook both the sociopragmatic and the psychopragmatic factors involved in such an understanding. It is also argued that, even when an additional aspect of language use — which I propose to call 'ontopragmatic' —

is taken into account by AI researchers, they do not fully exploit their own suggestion, for they propose to account for this factor in terms of speech act theory. Chapter 19 further explores the issues raised in Chapter 18, by looking into the new modalities of communication characteristic of the Digital Age. It argues that the Digital Age still falls short of exploiting the full potential of meaning embedded in both the semantic and the pragmatic aspects of language and language use, and suggests how this should and could be done.

In an (apparently) abrupt shift, Chapters 20 and 21 turn to politics and anthropology. Chapter 20 discusses the issue of freedom of expression and presents a new epistemological argument, based on the variability and context-dependence of interpretation, for a broad notion of "positive" tolerance. Chapter 21 examines and defends this notion in the context of cross-cultural communication, especially in relation to anthropological practice and the related philosophical discussion. It argues that relativism need not follow from the acceptance of deep cultural divergences (including divergences regarding such notions as 'rationality' itself), analyzes the territorial metaphors (such as "bridgehead") employed by anti-relativists, and concludes that a radical shift of root metaphors, taking into account what can be learned from pragmatics, is needed if one is to be able to escape this dilemma.

In Part 3 the pragmatic model is confronted with some of the alternative accounts of understanding and interpretation — more directly than in the preceding chapters and in the spirit of benefiting from objections stemming from these alternatives. Chapter 22 attempts to explain why the pragmatic interpretation of linguistic utterances is, in spite of all the problems previous chapters have shown it can face and despite the objections philosophers have raised against it, rather quite reliable. The chapter distinguishes between linguistic-semiotic acts and other kinds of actions, arguing that the former display a more direct connection between the mental states of the agent than the latter.

Chapter 23 continues the previous chapter's philosophical scrutiny of the foundations of pragmatics. Its purpose is to trace the underlying differences between Searle's and Grice's philosophies of language and the consequences of these differences for achieving a happy marriage between speech acts theory and Gricean pragmatics. Both philosophers object to the philosophical move (performed by what Grice calls the "A-philosophers") of identifying the conditions of use with the meaning of certain sentences (or other expressions). Yet the ways in which each of them proposes to deal with this discrepancy they

rightly accuse the A-philosophers to overlook are profoundly different. This chapter argues that it is these differences that give rise, on the one hand, to a theory of speech acts wherein most of the conditions of use are constitutively (hence, semantically) embedded and, on the other, to a "logic of conversation" that purports to account for the principles governing language use in a genuinely pragmatic (hence, non-semantic) way.

Chapter 24 further develops the criticism of Searle's use of speech acts as a paradigm for pragmatics by calling attention to the role of this paradigm in leading him to his "no-structure" thesis regarding conversation. It should be noted that a similar critique applies in part to my own earlier use (in Chapter 2) of the notion of illocutionary force as a key factor in determining the relevance of an utterance to the conversational demand set up by the preceding utterance. Yet, unlike Searle, I assumed that the relatively simple case of question-answer pairs could be taken as an example of the kind of structure present in other conversational sequences. Searle, however, contends that since the example in question cannot be generalized in the way I assumed it could, one must conclude that there is no such a thing as a systematic 'structure' of conversation. My rebuttal of this thesis consists mainly in arguing that one may discern in conversations structural principles of organization (i.e., a "logic of conversation") other than those determined by the kinds of rules typically governing individual speech acts or sequences thereof.

Chapter 25, "Contextualism", addresses itself to an earlier version of Searle's philosophy of language, characterized by a somewhat different strategy of his regarding the A-philosophers' move (see Chapter 23). Instead of attempting, so to speak, to incorporate some of the contextual conditions of use into the meaning components of expressions, such as speech act verbs, he rather stresses the context dependence of the meaning of *every* sentence (or expression) — which he takes to imply that the very notion of a context-free 'literal meaning' must be abandoned. The chapter rebukes this kind of 'radical contextualism', examines other forms of contextualism as well as of literalism, and proposes 'moderate literalism' as a reasonable way of accounting for the need of pragmatics to rely upon semantic entities such as 'sentence meaning'.

Chapters 22-25 take Searle's philosophy of action and philosophy of language as reference points. Chapter 22 builds upon his account of the intentionality of action, whereas Chapters 23-25 criticize what seems to me to be the core of his conception of meaning and linguistic action. On the whole the latter chapters argue that the reliability of communication derives from the

combination of the relative stability of semantic meanings that can be captured by a system of semantic rules with the flexibility of the use of such codified meanings allowed by a set of heuristic pragmatic rules that govern communication; the flexibility in question, however, provides sufficient constraints for structuring and guiding the process of interpretation so as to yield the observable reliability of such a process.

Chapter 26 pursues the defense of literal meaning undertaken in Chapter 25. But it defends this notion not against philosophical arguments seeking to show that there is no such a thing as a context-free or 'literal' reading of any sentence whatsoever — even those that seem to be paradigmatic examples of literalness. The objections discussed in 26a and 26b are based on empirical evidence, which allegedly demonstrates that literal meaning does not play the role it is usually taken to play in the psychological process of interpretation of sentences that are typically considered to require pragmatic interpretation — e.g., sentences that are clearly metaphorical, ironical, or used to perform indirect speech acts. My response to these objections is two-pronged. On the one hand, I question the validity of the evidence presented: first, because the sentences used in many of the experiments (e.g., idioms, conventional indirectness formulae, and 'frozen' metaphors) can hardly be considered typical examples of the need for immediate pragmatic interpretation; and second, because — even if they were — 'reaction time' is too rough a measure of the duration of the relevant psychological process. On the other hand, I present several examples of the incontestable presence of literal meaning or something akin to it in understanding — thus demonstrating, so to speak, positively the 'psychological reality' of this admittedly theoretical construct.

Chapter 27 defends literal meanings against yet another type of objection, namely the claim that, being 'encodings' of mental representations, they cannot be 'foundational', and therefore, in so far as semantics deals with literal meanings it is perforce at best a 'derivative' discipline; accordingly, the truly foundational discipline is pragmatics, for the origins of linguistic meanings, as well as the grounds for their effectiveness, lie at the level of interaction. On this view, linguistic meanings are in fact functional interactive operations that transform, change, and control knowledge structure, i.e., socially shared representations. That linguistic meanings may indeed have such functional roles and that they may originate in them seems to me plausible. But this does not entail that they may not develop into stable entities, relatively autonomous from their diachronic functional origins, and capable of being synchronically

used independently of them. Whatever its diachronic foundations, semantics can and must be acknowledged as a synchronically given that becomes a fundamental resource for pragmatics — both in its content- and in its interaction-related communicative functions (see Chapter 1).

One of the most important of these interactive functions is persuasion — the traditional domain of rhetoric, which has for too long been neglected by pragmaticists. Chapter 28 seeks to remedy this neglect, by proposing the conceptual basis for the integration of at least a significant part of rhetoric into pragmatics. The proposed bridge between them consists in the key cognitive operation of inference. The chapter shows how inference can be construed so as to include the three Aristotelian kinds of rhetorical 'proof' — stemming from *logos*, *êthos* and *pathos* — and discusses the implications of this broadening of its cognitive basis for rhetoric as well as for pragmatic theory.

In Chapter 29 a further neighboring discipline, hermeneutics, is examined in the light of its relevance for the central task of pragmatics — the account of interpretation. The insights of philosophical hermeneutics, with its emphasis on the role of the interpreter's assumptions and 'prejudices' — viewed both as raising difficulties for interpretation and as valuable tools thereof — are considered as pragmatic assets, once their metaphysical ontopragmatic overtones (see Chapter 18) are 'translated' into the more mundane language of pragmatics theory.

After the preceding chapters of the book have explored a broad range of phenomena that can be fruitfully handled in terms of the pragmatic model of interpretation and understanding, Chapter 30 inquires about the limits of our relentless search for meaning. Again using (as in Chapters 3 and 11) as hints or clues (Chapter 8) book titles — in this case of two books bearing the same title ("The limits of interpretation"), while holding rather opposed positions — this chapter charters the 'territory of interpretation' adding to the models studied before (Chapter 9) the 'experiential model', the attempts to make sense of nonsense, and other insights obtained from the books in question. It concludes with an ecumenical or eclectic proposal: all these different kinds of understanding and models thereof have some use and validity in specific circumstances and for specific purposes, provided none of them yield to their intrinsic imperialistic or reductionist tendencies to provide the only, ultimate, and true account of all forms of interpretation.

The work collected in this book is not only about a pragmatics inspired by the Principle of Cooperation. It is actually the result of numberless appli-

cations of this principle. On the technical side, I wish to thank Nurit Price and Adi Simon. Nurit began the compilation, scanning and pre-editing of the material; Adi completed this time-consuming work, spotting problems and helping to solve them, and finally producing a uniform and coherent format, a unified bibliography, and a readable book. Both Adi Simon and Varda Dascal, my wife and partner, contributed to the book's readability by assigning first priority to the preparation of the book's eyes, namely, the Subject and Name Indexes. On the content side, the book is the result of countless successful "conversations" where pragmatic phenomena were no doubt the major topic, but which did not exclude fruitful digressions, a lot of co-text and con-text, much involvement, and scientific as well as philosophical commitment. I wish to extend my deepest thanks to all my partners in this cooperative enterprise. They are individually mentioned in the "Sources and Acknowledgments" section, but — as I hope this book shows — the result amounts to much more than the sum of its individual parts. Through our cooperation, I had the invaluable opportunity of learning in the course of our intense interaction, as well as of experiencing genuine joy in doing so much together — for which I will be forever grateful.

M.D.
Leipzig, January 2003

Part I: Theorizing

Chapter 1

Pragmatics and communicative intentions

Due to the lack of agreement as to the *definition* of 'pragmatics', it is necessary to begin with a criterion for determining the phenomena this discipline has to account for (section 1). The criterion here proposed is not purely descriptive. Its normative character is highlighted by the fact that its application does not yield exatly the set of phenomena that pragmaticists of various persuasions include under the label 'pragmatics'. Its justification lies in its contribution to explaining the inclusions and exclusions in the domain of pragmatics of specific phenomena, to criticizing other definitions, to clarifying the relationship between semantics and pragmatics, and to identifying historical antecedents of the discipline as well as its present and future tasks. I proceed then to analyze (section 2) the most dramatic pragmatic phenomena, namely those where by saying 'p', one in fact communicates something quite different than what is meant by the sentence 'p'. Pragmatic research has devoted a large part of its efforts to account for this kind of phenomenon, where meaning is vehiculated *indirectly*. The role of *context*, be it linguistic or extra-linguistic, is essential in such an account. But context has also other functions, which it is imperative to examine carefully (section 3). The notion of *communicative intention* occupies a central position in the criterion proposed to characterize pragmatics, and it deserves special attention (section 4). I conclude by returning to the issue of the relationship between semantics and pragmatics, this time by inquiring whether it is possible or desirable to reduce the former to the latter (section 5).

1. How to define pragmatics?

1.1 It is customary to take as the starting point for any attempt to define pragmatics the well known trichotomy proposed by Charles Morris (1938) and elaborated by Rudolf Carnap (1942: 9):

> If in an investigation explicit reference is made to the speaker, or, to put it in more general terms, to the user of a language, then we assign it to the field of **pragmatics**. … If we abstract from the user of the language and analyze only the expressions and their designata, we are in the field of **semantics**. And if, finally, we abstract from the designata also and analyze only the relations between the expressions, we are in (logical) **syntax**.

The pragmatic investigation of a language, according to Carnap (1938: 147-148), includes observations of the following kinds:

> *Pragm. 1.* — Whenever the people utter a sentence of the form '… ist kalt', where '…' is the name of a thing, they intend to assert that the thing in question is cold.
> *Pragm. 2a.* — A certain lake in that country, which has no name in English, is usually called 'titisee'. When using this name, the people often think of plenty of fish and good meals.
> *Pragm. 2b.* — On certain holidays the lake is called 'rumber'; when using this name, the people often think — even during good weather — of the dangers of storm on the lake.
> *Pragm. 3.* — The word 'nicht' is used in sentences of the form 'nicht …', where '…' is a sentence. If the sentence '…' serves to express the assertion that such and such is the case, the whole sentence 'nicht …' is acknowledged as a correct assertion if such and such is not the case.

Observations like these constitute "the base of all linguistic research" (148). One could systematize them — says Carnap — by focusing on the preferences of different social groups in their choice of expressions (i.e., what today is the concern of *sociolinguistics*), by analyzing the role of language in expressing various social relations (the numerous studies of the "honorific" expressions in Japanese and the study of politeness would fall under this rubric), etc.

As a matter of fact, such systematic investigations do not interest Carnap *per se*. He is interested in them only in so far as they allow one to "slowly learn the designata and mode of use of all the words and expressions, especially the sentences" (ibid.), thereby leading to the two disciplines that result from the elimination of (or abstraction from) all reference to the speakers — i.e., to semantics and logical syntax. For Carnap, whereas these disciplines are *theoretical*, pragmatics is merely "an empirical discipline", which has not a method of its own, but rather makes use "of the results of different branches of science (principally social science, but also physics, biology, and psychology)" (ibid.).[1]

Regardless of its acceptability today,[2] Carnap's definition is an important reference point, both for the problems it raises and for the remaining influence of the "residual" model of defining the domain of pragmatics that is

implicit in it. The first problem is the question whether the elimination of the speakers (or, more generally, of the conditions of use) is feasible, i.e., whether it is possible — without loss of descriptive and explanatory adequacy — to develop a semantics and a syntax *of natural languages* which are independent of pragmatics.[3] Such a possibility has been questioned by those who point out the *essentially* pragmatic character of natural languages (Bar-Hillel), by those who identify meaning with conditions of use (Wittgenstein), and by linguists who adhere to "functionalism", according to which any linguistic expression has to be ultimately explained in terms of its (communicative) function.

The second problem with Carnap's definition is the dissolution of pragmatics into a bunch of several sciences, thus leaving it without a well defined object and a method. To be sure, Carnap (1938: 148) assigns to pragmatics the study of "a special kind of human behavior" with the task of determining "both the cause and the effect" of utterances. But the variety and multiplicity of "causes" and "effects" of linguistic behavior is so vast that, as acknowledged by Bloomfield, nothing less than the totality of human science would be needed in order to account for any given utterance in terms of its causes and effects. If it is conceived in such a comprehensive way, pragmatics loses whatever autonomy and coherence it might have. Furthermore, it is thus condemned to become one of those disciplines that deal with unsolvable "mysteries", rather than with scientifically solvable "problems" (cf. Chomsky 1975: Chapter 4).

Carnap's definition in fact identifies pragmatics with what Saussure called *parole* and Chomsky *performance*, i.e., with the linguistic behavior as such. But both Saussure and Chomsky argued that such a behavior actually results from a variety of causes and circumstances, only one of which is the underlying linguistic system. They argued that it is the latter — which they called, respectively, *langue* and *competence* — that a science of language should study and seek to systematize, for the simple reason that the former lacks systematicity. But is this verdict inescapable? Before accepting it, shouldn't one first try to delineate a systematic notion of, say, "pragmatic competence", capable to provide the grounds for a theoretically coherent and descriptively adequate theory accounting for the uses of language? Wouldn't it be possible to single out, within the multitude of causes and effects involved in linguistic activity, a discernible set of factors that circumscribe the "essence" of such an activity?

The problem of the dissolution and alleged a-systematicity of pragmatics is connected with Carnap's model of definition, which I have dubbed 'residual'. On this model, pragmatics is defined as the discipline that deals with those linguistic phenomena that the other linguistic disciplines (mainly semantics) are *not* supposed to deal with. Gazdar's (1979: 2) formula, "Pragmatics = Meaning — Truth Conditions", is one of several instances of the application of this model. It contends that pragmatics is in charge of explaining those meaning phenomena that semantics, conceived as a theory of thruth conditions, is not concerned with. Definitions such as these seem to give up in advance any hope to find some unity and coherence inherent in pragmatic phenomena, conceiving them as residues not yet digested by more serious (i.e., formal, systematic) disciplines. It is as if pragmatics — like philosophy, according to some — had as its sole function to collect those phenomena these disciplines had disdained or had neither time nor tools for studying scientifically, ready to hand them over to them once they overcome such limitations.[4] I don't see any reason to accept this residual model, at least not before one makes the necessary effort to develop a more substantive account of the object and methods of pragmatics. The human phenomena pragmatics has to account for are important enough to deserve such an effort.

1.2 As a starting point, it is worthwhile to examine carefully the residues of other theories, where the raw materials of pragmatics are to be found. A good place to begin with is what Bar-Hillel (1971) called "Frege's wastebasket". For Frege, semantics is interested exclusively in those aspects of meaning that have to do with the truth of the "thoughts" expressed by the sentences. Frege does not deny that there are aspects of "meaning" that are not relevant to truth; he simply contends that they are not of interest for semantic theory. The history of pragmatics in the twentieth century can be viewed as a series of attempts to selectively recycle the rich material set aside by Frege in his wastebasket.

There are three types of sentences containing meaning phenomena that Frege (1967) considers irrelevant to the semantic concern with truth: (a) sentences for which the question of truth does not arise; (b) sentences that express more than "thoughts"; and (c) sentences that are not sufficient, by themselves, to express a "thought". Group (a) includes sentences that express orders, requests, promises, etc. Group (b) includes those elements of sentences designed to excite the feelings or the imagination of the hearer (e.g., contrastive stress, word order, etc.) as well as suggestions and expecta-

tions, such as those produced by words such as *yet*, *already*, *still*, *but*, etc. Group (c) includes all sorts of deictic expressions (e.g., demonstratives, pronouns, temporal adverbs, etc.).

The fact that each of these types of meaning phenomena has been successively taken to be the paradigmatic object of pragmatics pays tribute to Frege's foresight. Speech act theory (Searle 1969, 1979a; Vanderveken 1985, 1990, 1991) focused on group (a); Grice's (1989: Chapters 2, 3, and 7) "logic of conversation" as well as Ducrot's (1979, 1972; Anscombre and Ducrot 1983) studies on "argumentative orientation" and other forms of implicitness devoted themselves to phenomena belonging to group (b). And the work of Benveniste (1966) about the presence of the speaking subject in his utterances, as well as Bar-Hillel's (1954, 1963) studies of "indexical expressions", later formalized by Montague (1974), have chosen group (c) as the privileged domain of pragmatics.

Each of these choices presupposes the residual model of definition, for it characterizes pragmatics as concerned with certain *aspects of meaning that fall outside the domain of semantics*. Nevertheless, each of them presupposes also its own "positive" criterion, according to which a phenomenon is respectively conceived as pragmatic if (a) it has to do with the nature of the speech act performed by uttering a sentence, or (b) it has to do with the "difference" between the meaning an utterance conveys and the standard meaning of the sentence uttered, or (c) it depends not only upon the sentence but also upon the context of its utterance. What these three conceptions of pragmatic emphasize are three different aspects of language use: (a) linguistic *action*, (b) the *implicit* meaning that can be inferred from such an action, and (c) the *context-dependence* of meaning.

Unfortunately, these criteria — neither taken one by one nor together — are insufficient to define a coherent set of aspects of meaning which is *in principle* distinguishable from those that have to be accounted for by a reasonable semantic theory. In order to see this, it is sufficient to notice that: (a) there are aspects of linguistic *action* that are semantically codified (e.g., those that characterize the so-called *performative* verbes — cf. Austin 1962, 1970); (b) some *implicit* meanings of linguistic actions are inferred semantically from the meaning of the uttered sentence (e.g., the so-called *semantic presuppositions*, the so-called *conventional implicatures*, etc.), whereas other implicitly vehiculated "meanings", although inferrable from the speaker's utterance, should not be properly considered as meanings *communicated* by him (e.g.,

the speaker's accent unvoluntarily reveals his origin, his tone of voice and facial expression reveal the degree of interest he has in the ongoing conversation, etc.); and (c) the *contextual* information needed to interpret the deictic expressions used by the speaker is, in fact, part of the *semantic* interpretation of the utterance, for without it it is impossible to determine what *proposition* or Fregean "thought" was expressed.[5]

1.3 The insufficiency of these three criteria (which are the most usual ones) to distinguish clearly between semantics and pragmatics indicates the need for a more basic principle in order to perform in a systematic way the important ecological operation of recycling Frege's waste.

The principle I propose is based on Grice's work on "meaning" (Grice 1989: Chapters 5, 6, and 14), prior to his elaboration of the "logic of conversation". Grice distinguishes, first, between "natural" meaning (these footprints mean that a bear has walked in this beach; this picture means that your wife has betrayed you) and "non-natural" meaning ('cama' in Catalan means bed; when Marcelo Dascal says 'I am hungry', the word 'I' refers to Marcelo Dascal; 'it is 10 p.m.' said by me to my younger daughter means that she is requested to go to bed). What characterizes non-natural meaning, according to Grice, is the fact that it comprises an element of *intentionality*, whether embedded lexically (as in 'cama' and 'I') or circumstantially (as in 'it is 10 p.m.').

Grice's second important contribution for our purposes consists in the distinction of three types of non-natural meaning, illustrated by the examples above: (a) the meaning of a sentence (*sentence meaning*) or part thereof; (b) the meaning of an utterance (*utterance meaning*) or part thereof; and (c) the meaning a speaker intends to convey or his communicative intention (*speaker's meaning*).[6] For Grice, the third of these types of non-natural meaning is the most basic, the other two being derived from it (see section 5). For this reason, he has devoted special effort to provide a rigorous definition of "speaker's meaning" (see section 4). Although both his definition and his thesis of the priority of speaker's meaning have been extensively criticized, the threefold distinction he proposes is sufficiently clear and intuitive in order to serve as the basis for a characterization of pragmatics and of its relationship with semantics (whose scope can also be characterized in terms of the threefold distinction).

Briefly stated, what I propose to define as the task of pragmatics is the study of the *use* of linguistic (or other) means through which a speaker

conveys his communicative intentions and a hearer recognizes them. The object of pragmatics, therefore, is the set of semiotic devices directly and specifically related to the transmission of speaker's meanings. These devices include, of course, the *exploitation* of sentence and utterance meanings, but not their *description* or the explanation of how they come into being — tasks which are the object of semantics. The latter deals with the determination of sentence meaning independently of its use, as well as with the determination of utterance meaning taking into account the contextual information *required* by the semantic structure of the sentence uttered.

The division of labor between pragmatics and semantics implied by this proposal is justified by several reasons. First, it corresponds to an objective division — perhaps ontologically grounded — of the domain of non-natural meaning: speaker's meaning, utterance meaning, and sentence meaning are different — albeit interrelated — entities. The first is a psychological state (an *intention*), the second is a particular abstract entity (a particular proposition), and the third is a function from contexts of utterance to propositions. For instance, the sentence 'it is cold in here' has a certain sentence meaning, which comprises at least three free variables whose values are not determined by the sentence itself: (a) a temporal variable (indicated by the verb's tense: *when* it is cold); (b) a spatial variable (indicated by the deictic 'in here': *where* it is cold), and (c) a comparative/quantitative variable (indicated by the comparative nature of the adjective 'cold', that refers to some contextually implied norm: *how much* cold it is in here). Each utterance of this sentence in a context will specify the values of these variables, thereby determining a proposition — i.e., a "meaning" — (e.g., at 12:00, on January 1st 2003, in lecture hall 277 at Tel Aviv University, it was colder than the average at that place and time). There is therefore an increment of meaning when one moves from the sentence meaning to the utterance meaning, with the help of contextual information. But the utterance meaning, although more "complete" than the sentence meaning, is insufficient to determine, by itself, the speaker's meaning. Even when we know the values of the free variables, the speaker may in fact want to transmit, through his utterance, something different from the proposition "at time *t*, in location *s*, it is colder than norm *n*". He may, for instance, use the utterance of 'It is cold in here' in order to ask someone to close the window, to suggest that the conditions are inappropriate for continuing the lecture, to blame the university's administration for its incompetence, etc. If the hearer stops his quest for meaning at the interpretation of the sentence or of the utterance, he

is likely not to grasp the speaker's communicative intention. In order to grasp it, he must go beyond semantics, and look also for the *pragmatic* interpretation of what the speaker said. Since linguistic acts have as their normal objective to convey communicative intentions, pragmatics — which investigates the principles that permit the transmission and recognition of such intentions — is indispensable for accounting for *every* communicative use of language.

Secondly, my proposal permits to put order in the traditionally messy relationships between semantics and pragmatics. In this way, it will assign to each of them what belongs *de jure* to it. In so doing, it will make use of what is worthwhile in the residual model and in the three traditional criteria in use for defining pragmatics.

First of all, let us observe that pragmatics and semantics bear to each other a *complementary*, rather than a *residual* relationship. Pragmatics is not needed only where semantics is insufficient for determining the sepeaker's meaning, because semantics *per se* is always insufficient for it. Even when there is no divergence between what the speaker intends to communicate and the meaning of his words — i.e., when communication is "transparent" (cf. Dascal 1983: Chapter 2) — we must have the means to determine that such a divergence does not occur in this particular case, because it is always possible that it does occur. In other words, we must always perform a pragmatic interpretation of an utterance, beyond its semantic interpretation. Semantics simply does *not* deal with the speaker's meaning. It has other aims, and it can fulfill them completely, i.e., *without residue*, provided it is duly extended in the way suggested above and justified in what follows. Pragmatics *complements* semantics by dealing with *another* component of communication, which is not a remainder but rather as essential to it as the components studied by semantics. And, I repeat, such a complementation is *always* necessary, whether the communicative intention is conveyed transparently or indirectly (cf. Dascal 1983: Chapter 3). Pragmatics and semantics work together, in parallel and complementary domains, cooperating, rather than fighting with each other. The advent of pragmatics not only does not deprive semantics from any of its tasks; on the contrary, according to my proposal it amplifies considerably the scope of its responsibilities.

Traditionally, semantics deals with the meanings of words and sentences. But there are good reasons to include in it the rules determining the meaning of utterances. For the sake of the argument, let us assume that semantics' task

is — as defined by Frege — the determination of the truth conditions of a "thought" expressed by a sentence. Semantics consists then in a set of compositional rules that associate truth conditions with sentences. But, if conceived in this way, it is clear that semantics cannot confine itself to *sentence* meaning, for — as we have seen — such a meaning is in general insufficient to determine truth conditions. That is to say, the inclusion in the scope of semantics of *utterance* meaning is *required* by the Fregean conception of semantics itself. This means that the appeal to context does not, as such, characterize a pragmatic phenomenon, distinguishing it from a semantic one. The contextual information, without which a sentence does not express truth conditions or propositions, is indespensable for semantics to accomplish its task. Pragmatics, on the basis of *other* kinds of contextual information, is in charge of verifying whether the proposition expressed by the utterance corresponds in fact to the speaker's communicative intention. The context has, therefore, different functions — a semantic and a pragmatic one — which should not be confounded (cf. Section 3).

To my mind, semantics must also include a significant portion of what *speech act theory* undertakes to do. The reason is that, if Searle and his collaborators are right, *every* utterance conveys, beyond a propositional content (p), also an "illocutionary content" (F), so that the underlying structure of any utterance is "$F(p)$". This means that the *semantic* interpretation of an utterance is incomplete if it does not specify, in addition to p, also F. That it is the *semantic* interpretation that is in question is due to the fact that the determination of the truth conditions depends not only upon the p, but also upon the F: only if we know that the utterance has the illocutionary force of an *assertion* it makes sense to speak of its truth conditions. Strictly speaking, only assertive speech acts have "truth conditions". Other speech acts — e.g., orders, requests, questions, promises, threats, etc. — have other "conditions of satisfaction". It is natural to extend semantics so that it covers all such conditions of satisfaction and, consequently, all types of illocutionary force, since without their specification one does not establish the meaning of utterances. In so far as speech act theory purports to provide an "illocutionary logic", which describes the basic types of illocutionary force, as well as their combinations, logical relations, and linguistic codification, it is complying with the intrinsic need of semantics to cover these aspects of utterance meaning. One should notice, however, that this implies that the reference to a linguistic *act*, which has as an essential component an "illocutionary force", is not, as such, "prag-

matic". What pragmatics has to do, in this respect, is to determine whether the semantically codified *F* of a given utterance corresponds to the illocutionary force the speaker intends to communicate — which it does on the basis of properties of linguistic action (e.g., its dialogical nature) that standard speech act theory abstracts from.

Those aspects of meaning that semantics must take into account to fulfill its task correspond, in general, to communicative intentions that have been "crystallized" or "conventionalized" in natural languages in the course of their evolution. Semantics' main job is to describe and analyze these regular meanings, yielding the "semantic rules" that regulate their usage. Such rules, like those of syntax, are algorithmic in nature. To be sure, they allow for the creative use of language, but such creativity amounts only to the generation of new combinations of expressions and meanings, within the limits of the extant system of rules. Pragmatics, on the other hand, must account for what a speaker actually expresses through an utterance, whether by obeying the rules or by violating them. In this sense, pragmatics must always take into account more than what is *explicitly said*, for it has to find out whether the explicitly said corresponds indeed to the intended speaker's meaning. For this purpose, it must always consider the dimension of the *implicit* as well. Nevertheless, this does not entail that pragmatics is nothing but the "theory of the implicit", for the following reasons: (a) the process of pragmatic interpretation may yield the conclusion that what was explicitly said corresponds perfectly to what was intended, and (b) not all types of implicitness are pragmatic in nature: most presuppositions, for instance, are usually part of sentence meaning (e.g., the sentence 'John arrived late' *semantically presupposes* that John arrived).

The conception of pragmatics here proposed permits to explain, in addition to ordinary communication, the incredible flexibility of language — in particular the possibility of conveying linguistically what is *radically new* or unexpected. This possibility consists in the capacity to express, with the available semantic resources, original communicative intentions that transcend those crystallized in those resources. Diachronically, a pragmatic innovation of this kind can later become conventionalized (e.g., in the so-called "frozen metaphors"), thereby becoming part of the semantic repertoire. That is to say, the conception here proposed contains the elements for an explanation of the evolution of meaning, which is typical of the dynamic character of natural languages. Often the expression of the new requires, even in ordinary com-

munication, the deliberate violation of semantic and syntactic rules. In so doing, speakers are confident that, even by saying something semantically and/or syntactically incorrect, they may convey — pragmatically — a recognizable communicative intention. The pragmatic principles that permit such a feat are not algorithmic in nature; they are rather heuristic, i.e., essentially fallible, and thereby differ from semantic and syntactic rules (see section 2).

1.4 Before concluding this section, let us return to those "natural" meanings that were set aside by Grice because they don't contain the intentionality characteristic of all forms of "non-natural" meaning. Shouldn't they also be included in the scope of pragmatics? After all, in order to perform satisfactorily the pragmatic interpretation of an utterance, a hearer must take into account a host of contextual indications that *accompany* the linguistic act, without being properly part thereof (as some gestures, for example, are). For instance, in order to understand that I am speaking ironically when I say 'John is a genius", my interlocutor must perceive that I say so with a smile which may be non-intentional. Similarly, his interpretation of my yawns in the course of our conversation as a sign that I am tired or disinterested in the topic, also seems to be relevant to the pragmatic interpretation of my contributions to the conversation.

Nevertheless, I think one should maintain Grice's exclusion of natural meaning, and attribute to pragmatics only the task of accounting for intentionally conveyed meanings. The reason is that intentionality involves a special type of causality (see section 4), different from the causality that connects, for example, a symptom with a physiological condition underlying it. The yawn is, in its natural form, a symptom of tiredness, which it "expresses" involuntarily. A good actor can, of course, produce voluntarily the symptom in the absence of the underlying physiological condition. But if he does so with communicative aims (i.e., if he *has the intention* to indicate to the hearer, through his yawns, that he does not want to pursue the topic of conversation), the communication will succeed only if this intention is recognized and interpreted as intentional, but not if he interprets it in terms of the normal causal relationship yawn/tiredness. The latter type of interpretation does not pertain to pragmatics, but to another discipline, akin to what traditional medicine treatises used to call "semeiology" and modern ones call "symptomatology".[7]

In other words, pragmatic interpretation should not be confused with other forms of interpretation. Psychoanalysis, for example, treats some utterances as "symptoms" of deep uncounscious processes, thereby providing a kind of interpretation categorially different from pragmatic interpretation, which is concerned only with conscious communicative intentions, i.e., with those meanings whose transmission are under the speaker's control. In terms of the terminological proposal in the preceding paragraph, psychoanalytic interpretation is "semeiological". Curiously, "pure" semantic interpretation or the mere decodification of sentence meaning bears some resemblance to this semeiological level of interpretation, for it too makes abstraction of the speaker's intentions, paying attention only to the semantic rules of language. The ontological niche of pragmatics is located in a reasonably well defined position between what is semantically codified, on the one hand, and what is causally determined, on the other. At these two extremes, what is "expressed" is not strictly under the control of the speaker (or hearer), who is not, therefore, the "author" of what his words express. Pragmatics, on the contrary, is concerned with those aspects of the meaning conveyed by linguistic action for which the speaker is responsible as intentional performer.

2. Saying without saying

In the light of the distinction between speaker's meaning — the object of pragmatics — and the other types of meaning, it is natural that the most remarkable pragmatic phenomena be those where this distinction is dramatically exemplified. These are the cases where what we actually "say" is substantially different from what our words "say". I have already mentioned a few examples of this kind of phenomena: irony , non-frozen metaphors, indirect speech acts, and conversational implicatures.

The question raised by examples of *indirect* communication such as these, a question pragmatic theory must answer, is: what are the resources we employ in such cases so as to ensure that our communicative intentions be correctly understood? To my mind, the answer must be shared with the general explanation — that pragmatics must provide — of *all* forms of transmission of communicative intentions, including those that are not "indirect" but rather "transparent".

Grice's pioneering work on the "logic of conversation" is still today an essential contribution for the explanation of indirect communication. His key idea is that pragmatic interpretation is an *inferential* process through which the hearer tries to find the most reasonable *explanatory hypothesis* for the linguistic act performed by the speaker in the context of utterance. The need for looking for an explanatory hypothesis is due to the fact that the linguistic act in question is perceived, in some respect, as "problematic". Grice identified and analyzed a particularly important kind of problematicity, namely the conflict between the linguistic act performed by the speaker and the expectations any "normal" hearer would have in the given circumstances. For instance, if someone is asked what time is it, it is normally expected that he reply by telling the time or perhaps by excusing himself for not having a watch. But if the person replies 'In my designer Rolex, purchased in Switzerland thanks to the inheritance I received from my millionaire aunt, the time is precisely 18 hours, 57 minutes and 15 seconds', he has gone beyond the normal expectations, which poses for the hearer the problem of determining why the speaker did so, i.e., of finding out what he actually intended to communicate with this utterance.

According to Grice, in this example, the speaker violated one of the "conversational maxims", the *maxim of quantity*, according to which one is not supposed to provide neither more nor less information than required in the particular situation. This maxim, along with the other three that complete Grice's system of conversational maxims,[8] are derived from the idea that conversation is a cooperative process, which imposes some requirement of (instrumental) rationality upon any conversational contribution. In other words: every conversation is based on a *Principle of Cooperation* (PC) — "Make your contribution so that it corresponds to what is required"; the maxims simply spell out different aspects of this principle.

For Grice, the inference that leads to the solution of the "problem" detected by the hearer, in cases such as the above, has the following pattern: (a) [S]peaker says that *p*; (b) in so doing, he is apparently violating one (or more) of the conversational maxims; (c) but [H]earer has no reason to suppose that S is not observing the maxims, or at least the PC; (d) he could not be doing this while saying that *p* unless he thought that *q*; (e) S knows (and knows that H knows that he knows) that *q* is required; (f) S does nothing to prevent H from thinking that *q*; (g) S intends H to think, or at least he is willing to allow H to think that *q*; therefore (h) S implicates that *q* (cf. Dascal 1983:141-142).[9]

Although they are presented as deductive by Grice, inferences of this type are in fact *abductive*, for their essential step, (d), consists in producing an hypthesis capable of resolving the conflict between (b) and (c).[10] Furthermore, a *presumptive* premise of cooperation, (c), is an essential part of the inference pattern — and it is well known that the conclusions based on presumptions are taken to be true only provisionally, i.e., unless they are shown to be false. These properties of the Gricean inference pattern explain some characteristics of what is communicated indirectly, among which:

> *a) Cancelability*: There is no contradiction in denying or canceling the conclusion of such an inference: the conversational implicature attributed to the speaker of 'It is 10 p.m.' (i.e., "Go to bed"), can be easily cancelled ('…but today you are allowed to stay awake until 12 p.m.'). But one cannot cancel logical or semantic implications without contradiction, as in 'John is a bachelor; here comes his wife Joanna'.
> b) The *heuristic*, rather than algorithmic, character of the pragmatic interpretation process: the "rules" of the logic of conversation *suggest* (non-obligatory) ways for generating explanatory hypothesis; they do not allow one to conclusively *calculate* such hypotheses.
> c) The *defeasible* and consequently *revisable* character of pragmatic interpretation: an explanatory hypothesis initially considered to be adequate may be rejected or modified in the light of additional information.
> d) The possibility of deliberately *exploiting* the presumptive character of the maxims in order to engender implicatures: the violation of a maxim turns out to be only *apparent*, unless one has reasons to assume that the presumption that the speaker is obeying the PC is untenable in the circumstances; one assumes, therefore, that there is a communicative intention that cannot be equated with the utterance meaning, and that is capable to restore the veracity of the presumption that the speaker is actually obeying the maxim he apparently violated.
> e) The possibility the speaker has to *disclaim responsibility* for the implicature conveyed by his utterance, by denying that he intended to communicate that which the hearer inferred — heuristically, abductively and defeasibly — from that utterance.

Conversational implicatures are not the only kind of "saying without saying" analyzed by Grice. But they are, no doubt, the paradigmatic example of his pragmatic theory, and they fit perfectly the criterion for defining pragmatics here proposed. Furthermore, his analysis of this phenomenon provides a satisfactory basis for showing how the explanation of indirect communication can be combined with that of transparent communication in a comprehensive pragmatic model. This amounts to combining this "second" Grice of the logic

of conversation, with the "first" one, who has stressed the centrality of the notion of speaker's meaning (section 1.3).

Such a combination is not difficult. In order to achieve it, it is necessary to admit three further ideas, all of them independently justifiable: (1) The idea that in *all* communication worth its name the hearer faces the problem of determining the speaker's communicative intention. This transforms *every* process of pragmatic interpretation into an inferential-abductive process of the type described by Grice.[11] (2) The idea that there is a "natural" order of generating interpretive hypotheses, the first or most "natural" one being the identification of the speaker's meaning with the utterance meaning. (3) The presumption that an interpretive hypothesis (generated in its appropriate place in the natural order) is to be accepted, if there is no reason to reject it. In the general model of pragmatic interpretation based on these ideas (cf. Dascal 1983: 149-152), transparent communication is simply a special case, where the *first* interpretive hypothesis (according to 2) is accepted because there are no reasons to reject it (according to 3). Indirect communication, on the other hand, results from the rejection of the first interpretive hypothesis and the consequent search for alternative hypotheses. Both cases are analogous, for in both the interpreter must check (within reasonable limits) the absence of reasons against the interpretive hypothesis examined. Only after having done so can he choose it as the speaker's communicative intention. The difference between the two cases lies in the fact that, in the former, the first hypothesis is "automatically" generated by the semantic rules, whereas in the latter it is the result of an additional interpretive-abductive effort. It should be noticed, however, that the "automaticity" of the first case is restricted to the generation of the interpretive hypothesis; its acceptation, in its turn, requires — precisely like in the second case — the additional *pragmatic* step of verifying whether the presumption in favor of the examined hypothesis (according to 3) remains defensible in the light of the available contextual information.

3. The context

As we have seen, the importance of context for pragmatics is so decisive that contextual dependence has been considered by some the defining feature of the discipline. Max Black, in the first international pragmatics conference (held in Jerusalem, 1971), proposed to define pragmatics as the science of

context and to call it, accordingly, "contextics". But, as in the case of Bloomfield's characterization of semantics, such a definition would mean the dissolution of pragmatics as a coherent domain. The problem is, therefore, how to handle context systematically in a way that does justice to its overwhelming importance in communication.

For this purpose, it is necessary to acknowledge first the difference between its two main communicative functions. I have pointed out (section 1.2) that one of these functions, which I consider to belong to the extended version of semantics, consists in providing values for the "gaps" or free variables contained in the sentence meaning.[12] This function permits to restrict the context to a limited number of "objects" or types of data, corresponding to the types of free variables represented by the semantic and syntactic repertoire of a language. Since these variables comprise more than the deictic expressions, the sets of contextual objects that are relevant for this function of context are not so few in number as believed by earlier researchers such as Montague. Whatever their number, however, this function of context amounts to providing the information necessary to move from sentence meaning to utterance meaning.

Moving to speaker's meaning assigns to context other functions. In terms of the last paragraph of section 2, the "completing" function of the context just described permits only to reach the first interpretive hypothesis. But, from there onwards, the context is, in the first place, the main source of information for determining whether this hypothesis corresponds to the speaker's meaning or not. Only through knowledge about the family rules governing my daughter's sleeping schedule can we determine whether to be satisfied with the semantic interpretation of the utterance of 'It is 10 p.m.' addressed to her or not. Once we decide that this interpretation is not sufficient given the contextual information available, the context acquires a further function: to provide clues for the generation of alternative interpretive hypotheses, whose acceptability, in turn, must be evaluated in the light of contextual information.

That is to say, in the process of determining the speaker's meaning, the context acts, on the one hand, as the arbiter of the interpretive hypotheses under consideration (whatever their source) and, on the other, as contributing to the mechanism of generation of such hypotheses. In the former capacity, it functions as the indicator or *cue* of the existence (or not) of the need to produce new interpretive hypotheses; in the latter, as providing *clues* for generating such hypotheses (see Chapter 8a).

In principle, any piece of contextual information can be relevant for these two functions. In this sense, it is impossible to restrict "the context" to any given set of data. One can, however, study it in an orderly and functional way.[13] A useful form of doing so is by distinguishing two general types of context, the "meta-linguistic" and the "extra-linguistic". The former includes the "text" or "discourse" where the utterance under interpretation is inserted, as well as other types of linguistic information, such as the language and dialect spoken by the speaker, the genre to which this particular piece of discourse belongs, the register he employs in this particular utterance, the communication norms that apply to the particular situation of utterance, etc. This notion of "meta-linguistic context" is a generalization of the earlier notion of "co-text". The "extra-linguistic" context includes information about the "universe of reference" to which the utterance refers, the background of shared knowledge and beliefs of speaker and audience, the specific circumstances of the situation of utterance, the particular habits and idyosincrasies of speaker and audience, etc. Each of these types of context can, in turn, be subdivided into three levels: generic, intermediate and specific. A taxonomy such as this permits to analyze systematically the contributions of the different components of context to the determination of the speaker's meaning and to identify them for each particular utterance, thus escaping the frustrating image of the context as an immense bottomless bag of undifferentiated contents (for details and examples, see Chapter 8a).

4. Communicative intentions

In his classic article "Meaning" (1957), Grice gives the following characterization of the non-natural speaker meaning conveyed by a speaker who utters *x*:

> A meant something by *x*" is (roughly) equivalent to "A intended the utterance of *x* to produce some effect in an audience by means of the recognition of this intention" (Grice 1989:220).

The basic idea expressed in this definition, which is already present in Locke, is that there is communication properly speaking only when what *causes* the effect the speaker wishes to produce in the audience is the latter's *recognition* of the former's communicative intention. In other words, communicative action displays a special mode of causation.[14] Thus, if I want you to think about *Hamlet*, and if I intend to achieve this by reciting verses of the play in

the bathroom, and if this leads you to think about *Hamlet*, but *without* recognizing that this was the intention of my recitation (for example, because you assume that I am rehearsing for the performance tonight), communication has *not* occurred between us.

The framework to which this conception of communication belongs is a mentalistic conception of action, which employs without qualms concepts such as propositional attitude, representation and mental state.[15] The idea shared by most mentalist theories of action is that what distinguishes an *action* from a mere *happening* is the necessary presence in the former of an intention which is, furthermore, its *cause*.[16] From an ontological point of view, such theories have to face nothing less than the problem of mind/body relations, which Descartes and many others were not able to solve — and I doubt whether today we know how to solve it. From a conceptual point of view, a reasonable solution is the one proposed, for example, by Searle, namely to conceive the relationship between intention and action as a particular case of the relationship between a representation and its conditions of satisfaction.[17] That is to say, an intention to act *represents* the conditions of satisfaction of the action, and is realized if the performed action *satisfies* these conditions. On this view, the intention must be self-referential. For instance, it is not sufficient that my intention to raise my arm represent the content "that I perform the action of raising my arm"; it must rather represent the content "that I perform the action of raising my arm with the aim of realizing the present intention"; otherwise, upward involuntary movements of my arm would satisfy the conditions of satisfaction of my intention, which is absurd.

Such an essential self-referentiality of every intention to act is the one that appears in the definition of communicative intention, and it is not surprising that Searle (1981: 83), in order to illustrate the notion in question makes use of examples of communicative action. Communicative intention and action have, however, at least two specific properties, not shared by other forms of action. First, their inherently *social* character: in a communicative action, the agent's (speaker's) intention necessarily refers to intentions (or at least to intentional states) of another person (the audience). As we shall see, some critics of Grice's and Searle's conception of communication believe that this reference is not sufficient for accounting for the fundamentally social nature of communication. Secondly, the self-referentiality of communicative intentions is more complex than the normal self-referentiality of intentions to act, for it involves a higher degree of iteractivity.

In fact, when elaborating in 1971 his initial definition, Grice specified both the "something" and the "effect" intended by the speaker as psychological states (propositional attitudes) of the kind "to believe that *p*", "to intend to do *p*", etc. In addition to that, he distinguished between *exhibitive* utterances (where the speaker simply intends the hearer to learn about his propositional attitude) and *protreptic* utterances (where he also wants to induce in the hearer a corresponding propositional attitude). This yields the following revised definition, for protreptic utterances:

> By (when) uttering x U meant that $*_{PSI}$ p = df. "(there is an A such that) (U uttered x M-intending (a) that A should think U to PSI that p and [in some cases only, depending on the identification of $*_{PSI}$ p], and (b) that A should, via the fulfillment of (a), himself PSI that p)" (Grice 1989: 123).[18]

Even in this elaborated form, however, this definition has several deficiencies, which have led to further elaboration.

The first problem, which is critical for the use of this definition in pragmatics, lies in the fact that Grice does not tell us *how* the recognition of the intention occurs. Schiffer (1988: 13) undertook to face this problem, by spelling out the relevant set of the speaker's intentions, which includes, according to him, the following ones:

a) The intention that *x* possesse some property *f*.
b) The intention that A recognize that *x* has *f*.
c) The intention that A infer, at least partly from the fact that *x* is *f*, that U has uttered *x* with intention (d).
d) The intention that the utterance of *x* by U produce in A a certain reaction *r*.
e) The intention that the recognition by A of U's intention (d) function as (part of the) reason for A's reaction *r*.

The relevant property *f* of an utterance of 'Il pleut' may be, for example, that it is a French sentence that means "it is raining". In this case, at least part of the recognition of the speaker's communicative intention relies upon the identification of syntactic and semantic properties of the sentence uttered (*x*).[19] However, as we know, this is not sufficient for determining the speaker's meaning, which may be at variance with sentence and utterance meaning. The main task of pragmatics is to explain the details of the inferential mechanisms the hearer employs for the recognition of the speaker's communicative intention (cf. sections 2 and 3 above). The merit of Grice's definition, in this respect, is that by emphasizing the role of such a recognition, it creates the necessary space for pragmatics to achieve this task.

A second problem to be addressed is that the expanded set of intentions proposed by Schiffer is still insufficient to handle certain counter-examples (due to Searle and Strawson), where some form of deception or some convoluted communicative intention are involved. Let us suppose, for instance, that the speaker (S) wants A to get out of the room; for this purpose he begins to sing loudly and out of tune, not only with the intention that A leave the room, but also in order to show his contempt for A, whom he doesn't want to stay in the room with him. In this case, (a) S intends A to *think* that S intends A to leave due to his singing, but also (b) S intends that the true reason for A to leave be the fact that S so desires, rather than the discomfort caused by his singing. If A does not recognize intention (b) and leaves due to (a), S's *communicative intention* is not fully accomplished, even though the conditions specified in the *definiens* of Grice's definition are satisfied by A's recognition of (a). In order to avoid counter-examples such as these, one must add to the *definiens* further intentions, whose content includes prior intentions (Schiffer 1988: 19):

f) The intention that A recognize S's intention (c).
g) The intention that A recognize S's intention (e).

Yet, for any addition of this type to the *definiens*, one may produce new counter-examples that would require further additions, so that Grice's definition would lead to an infinite regress. Schiffer proposes to solve this problem by means of a recursive notion of speaker-hearer "mutual knowledge", whereas Grice (1989: 93-105) argues that it is not so easy to create more complex counter-examples and that, anyway, the kind of infinite regress they would demand does not involve circularity, and therefore is not damaging to his definition.

The discussion of these counter-examples and of the modifications of the definition they require are important for pragmatics. In a sense, the deliberate violation of a conversational maxim is analogous to the cases of deception or of complex intentions displayed in these counter-examples. The communicative intention of a speaker that uses indirectness in conversation includes, among other things, the following: (a) that the audience (A) recognize that the speaker (S) is complying with the PC; (b) that A recognize that S intends A to think that S has violated one or more maxims; (c) that A recognize that there is a conflict between what he recognizes in (a) and (b); (d) that A infer that this conflict is apparent; (e) that A look for an alternative interpretation for S's

utterance that overcomes the conflict recognized by him in (c). This analogy shows that the basic structure of Grice's definition, along with the required revisions discussed above, contains the elements for its application to the "logic of conversation", albeit Grice didn't explicitly connect these two parts of his work.[20]

While the two problems so far discussed are, say, of a technical nature, there have been also principled objections against theories such as Grice's. One of these objections consists in questioning the utility or scientificity of any theory whose "laws" are nothing but what "folk psychology" tells us. In a "scientific" psychology, these critics would say, there is no room for superficial "popular" concepts such as intention, and our mental life and communicative behavior must be analyzed and explained in terms of deeper and precisely formulated regularities. For these critics, Grice's definition may perhaps be nice examples of the philosophical analysis of concepts, but they do not afford an explanation of the real phenomena they purport to account for. Objections of this kind form part of a prolonged debate in the philosophy of mind, of which the well known battle between Fodor (and his followers) and Stich, the Churchlands and others is only one of the recent rounds. It is obvious that I do not accept this kind of objection, given my use of the notion of intentionality in my definition of pragmatics. But I will not try to argue against the objectors here, since this would require — in order to do justice to the rich and detailed literature on the issue — an excessively lengthy digression. Let me just point out that, whether they will ultimately become part of the scientific conceptual apparatus explaining communication or not, the mentalistic notions we have been using for this purpose form part at least of the *explanandum* any scientific theory of communication will have to provide an explanation for. In this sense, by elaborating and refining such an *explanandum*, we are perhaps not providing the ultimate theory, but we are certainly preparing the ground for it.

Another kind of criticism comes from those that are unsatisfied with the individualistic and subjective character of the Gricean approach to communicative action, according to which the process of communication begins with the formulation of a complex intention in the mind of a speaker and ends with an appropriate mental event in the mind of the hearer. Some anthropologists, for example, have pointed out that there are rituals where the speaker doesn't even understand what he says, and therefore cannot have the intention that the audience reach a certain psychological state by virtue of the recognition of

what the speaker intended to convey. According to them, this shows that the intention is not a necessary component of *every* linguistic act, from which they conclude that the nature of linguistic acts must be explained in terms of the social situation, involving speaker and audience, where it is performed. Nuyts (1994), who has examined this kind of criticism, rejects it as too far fetched. He points out that even in ritualized linguistic acts there are intentions of several kinds: "generic" ones (for example, the intention to perform the ritual as part of the community's social life), "situational" ones (for example, the intention to perform it correctly in a particular occasion), and "communicative" (for example, the intention to pronounce correctly the divinatory verses so as to allow the audience — e.g., a particular "client" — to draw the conclusions that seem appropriate to him, even if the speaker does not or cannot have the specific intention to convey such conclusions). Nuyts, however, agrees with the critics regarding the *insufficiency* of intentions for accounting for the interpretation of linguistic acts, and highlights the importance of other factors such as conventions and social relations. According to him, these factors have the same weight as intentions and are not necessarily subordinated to them.

To my mind, the importance of the social aspects of communication for pragmatics is beyond doubt. Nevertheless, it would be a mistake — comparable to the *replacement* of the pragmatic model by the causal one (section 1.4) — to propose a theory of communication based only on its social aspects. Furthermore, the insufficience of *individual* intentions to explain communication should not lead one to set them aside nor to minimize their role. No doubt some of the intentions that govern the communicative process (not only in the case of rituals) are *collective* rather than individual intentions. For example, in a meeting of an executive board, the participants have, collectively, the intention to make some decisions about topics in the agenda, and their individual communicative contributions are subordinated (at least in part) to the collective intention. Furthermore, the notion of collective intention cannot be easily derived from sets of individual intentions (see Chapter 5; Searle 1990). I cannot see, however, any difficulty in integrating this notion in the mentalistic conceptual apparatus of pragmatics.

None of the criticisms discussed above, nor others I am aware of, deal a mortal blow to the thesis that communicative intention is one of the fundamental components of any satisfactory explanation of communication, and hence of pragmatics. What these criticisms show is the need to further elabo-

rate this notion (for example, by adding to it several levels and types of individual and collective intentions) and, above all, to couple it with a pragmatic theory where the pertinent social factors occupy their appropriate position among the meta-linguistic and extra-linguistic contextual factors. Conceived in this way, the intention-based "research program" continues to be robust and fertile and provides a solid theoretical basis for the development of pragmatics.[21]

5. Semantics and pragmatics: reductionism?

Throughout the present chapter, I have defended the anti-reductionist thesis of the *complementarity* between semantics and pragmatics. I have pointed out the intimate relationship between them, but also their independence from each other. I would like to conclude by supporting this position with a brief critical examination of the opposite position, namely the one that purports to reduce semantics to pragmatics.[22]

The "second" Wittgenstein, as well as some representatives of "ordinary language philosophy" seem to represent a reductionism of this kind. According to them, the meaning of an expression is nothing but its *conditions of usage* within a certain "language game". Taken rigorously, such a thesis implies that *every* condition of usage is, *ipso facto*, a component of meaning, and vice-versa. But the failure of such a thesis — for example, in the analysis of the meaning of philosophically central expressions such as 'voluntary' or 'good' — has been clearly demonstrated (cf. Grice 1989: 1-21; see Chapter 23). From the fact that when someone utters the assertion 'This movie is good' he is in general *recommending* the movie to his interlocutor, one cannot conclude that the *meaning* of 'x is good' is 'I recommend x to you'. The reason is that when one utters compound sentences containing 'x is good' (e.g., 'If this movie is good, it deserves an Oscar'), one is not performing the act of recommending. And it wouldn't make much sense either to try to save the thesis by saying that in such utterances at least a "conditional recommendation" is performed. To be sure, the philosophers that pointed out the importance of the conditions of usage have contributed to pragmatics valuable conceptual analyses — and in this I agree with Camps (1976), who includes Wittgenstein in the list of forefathers of pragmatics. Nevertheless, their reductionistic drive prevented them from discerning the different kinds of factors that interact in the

determination of what is conveyed by an utterance. Without such a differentiation, neither semantics nor pragmatics can, in my opinion, be developed in an adequate way.

One might think that the Gricean program itself ultimately reduces semantics to pragmatics, by emphasizing the priority of speaker's meaning. Indeed, this program, that Schiffer (1988) dubbed "Intention-based Semantics" (IBS), has a reductionistic orientation. If it were to be accomplished, it would reduce the semantic notions of sentence and utterance meaning to the pragmatic notion of speaker's meaning. But this orientation conflicts with Grice's critique of the attempts to reduce meaning to conditions of usage. It also conflicts with his main motivation for proposing his pragmatic theory, namely the wish not to "pollute" logic and semantics with aspects of meaning of a pragmatic nature. If pragmatics rather than logic or semantics accounts for the asymmetry (and consequently non-equivalence) between the conjunctions 'They got married and had many children' and 'They had many children and got married', then — as Grice points out — it is not necessary to modify the logic or the semantics of the connective 'and', which can continue to be correctly described by its truth-table, according to which 'p and q' and 'p and q' are equivalent.

The solution for the apparent conflict between Grice's two positions lies, I submit, in the need to distinguish between a *diachronic* and a *synchronic* perspective. The former has to do with the *grounding* of meaning; the latter, with its *functioning*. The former undertakes to explain what is "posterior" (chronologically or logically) in terms of what is "anterior". It is under this perspective that IBS "reduces" semantics to pragmatics: the notion of speaker's meaning is understood as logically (and diachronically) basic, and the other types of meaning as derivable from it. But under the second perspective, once the semantic meanings have been "derived" or "crystallized" from repeated successful communication of speaker's meanings, they become available for use in communication. Once this has happened, the semantic and syntactic properties of these expressions acquire a central function both in the formulation and in the interpretation of the speaker's communicative intentions. In order to convey his meaning, the speaker must take into account the availability of these crystallized meanings and make use of them.

Now, from the point of view of a pragmatic theory conceived as a theory of how communication *functions*, it is unimportant (in principle) wherefrom

semantic meanings come or how they are logically grounded. For this reason, it is possible to dissociate the two components of Grice's program. A Gricean pragmatics, therefore, need not be committed to IBS, and is compatible with other forms of grounding of semantics.

Distinguishing between these two perspectives has other advantages. One of them is that it permits to circumvent the objection, addressed against IBS, that points out that intentions (as well as other propositional attitudes) depend upon language. The reply consists in admitting that indeed complex intentions, such as that of drinking a glass of Chianti from a specific vintage, are only possible thanks to the existence of an elaborate linguistic repertoire for its (mental) formulation and differentiation from other similarly complex intentions. A dog, however intelligent, cannot have this type of intentions. For this reason, such intentions did not exist "initially", when language was not available to humankind. Nevertheless, the linguistic means needed for having such intentions, which did not exist *ab initio*, gradually evolved from simpler intentions, which can be assumed to have been independent of language; and "at present" they grant us the possibility of desiring that special Chianti.

Another application of the same distinction is that it permits to acknowledge that, even though the primary and presumably "initial" function of language is communication, it may acquire other uses, no less important, but governed by principles that differ from the communicative ones. A case in point is the use of language *in* mental processes, whose investigation is the task of a separate branch of pragmatics I have proposed to call *psychopragmatics*, in contradistinction to *sociopragmatics,* whose concern is the communicative use of language. And there may be other particularly important uses of language, governed by special principles, that will in due time be acknowledged as separate branches of pragmatics. For example, it is plausible to assume that the creation of such a powerful tool as language has changed the conditions of human existence quite radically — just like the appearance of the first organic molecules, with the consequent appearance of free oxygen, modified radically the environment. So, even though *ab initio* it was surely false that language was "the house of being", maybe Heidegger is right in making this *ontopragmatic* claim today.

Notes

1. Here are some other examples of "*pragmatical* investigations" according to Carnap (1942: 10): "a physiological analysis of the processes in the speaking organs and in the nervous system connected with speaking activities; a psychological analysis of the relations between speaking behavior and other behavior; a psychological study of the different connotations of one and the same work for different individuals; ethnological and sociological studies of the speaking habits and their differences in different tribes, different age groups, social strata; a study of the procedures applied by scientists in recording the results of experiments, etc.". The most important word in this list is 'etc.'.

2. Carnap's trichotomy has been declared irrelevant to present-day pragmatics (Gazdar 1979; Sayward 1974), and some of the inconsistencies in Carnap's conception of pragmatics have been pointed out (Levinson 1983).

3. "Once the semantical and syntactical features of a language have been found by way of pragmatics, we may turn our attention away from the users and restrict it to those semantical and syntactical features" (Carnap 1942: 13).

4. Habermas (1987) chose the excellent expression *Platzhalter* (place holder) to refer to this "modest" function of philosophy. However, if in the wake of post-modern criticism of what I have termed "the arrogance of Reason" (cf. Dascal 1990a), it is justified to assign to philosophy this modest role, I don't see why pragmatics deserves a similar treatment.

5. For a more detailed argument concerning the insufficiency of the three criteria, see Dascal (1983: 25-30).

6. Grice calls the first tipe of meaning "timeless meaning of an utterance type", the second "applied timeless meaning of an utterance type", and the third "utterer's meaning".

7. There are in the history of medicine traditions that have privileged not the symptom, but other types of sign (cf. Schonauer 1986).

8. The other maxims are: the maxim of *quality* ("Try to make your contribution one that is true"), the maxim of *relation* ("Be relevant"), and the maxim of *manner* ("Be perspicuous"). Some of these maxims, including the maxim of quantity, comport specifications under the form of "sub-maxims" (cf. Grice 1989: 27).

9. Grice distinguishes between "implicate" and "imply". To the former verb corresponds the neologism "implicature". This terminological distinction marks the fact that the conclusion of the pragmatic inference schematized above, the "implicature", has not the force of a logical implication.

10. The notion of abduction was introduced by Peirce and developed, among others, by Hanson (1965). For its application to pragmatic interpretation, see Dascal (1983: 142 f.). The possibility and fruitfulness of the formalization of an abductive conception of interpretation is illustrated by recent work in artificial intelligence (cf. Hobbs et al. 1993), although these authors deal mainly with aspects of interpretation (such as the determination of reference, disambiguation, etc.) that, in my opinion, belong to semantics.

11. The process of interpretation would be deductive if it could be restricted to semantic

interpretation, and it would be inductive if it could be restricted to causal interpretation. But I have argued before that these two models of interpretation are substantively different from pragmatic interpretation, and therefore insufficient for accounting for the most typical phenomena of human communication.

12. This function of the context corresponds to what Sperber and Wilson (1986) call "filling" or "completing" the logical form of an utterance.

13. One form of doing this is by following Sperber and Wilson (1986), who define the "context" (of a person) as the set of assumptions this person accepts as true or probably true. According to them, the important notion for pragmatics is that of "contextual effects", i.e., of modifications of the "context" which are due to its interaction with "new information". What I am here calling "context" is rather the source of the information responsible for their "contextual effects".

14. Grice (1989: 221) stresses that the effect intended by the speaker "must be something which in some sense is within the control of the audience, or that in some sense of 'reason' the recognition of the intention behind [the utterance of] *x* is for the audience a reason and not a cause". On the special nature of the causation typical of intentional action, see Davidson (1971) as well as other chapters in Binkley et al. (1971).

15. In this, it is radically different, for example, from the framework of Talcott Parsons' theory of action, which adopts the behaviorist opposition to the use of any term referring to the "mental" (cf. Parsons and Shils 1962).

16. See, for instance, Searle (1981, 1983). Even when we perform an "unintentional action" (e.g., Edipus marrying his mother without knowing that), according to Searle, what we do is only an "action" insofar as it is parasitic upon an intentional action (marrying Jocasta, in the example). See Dascal and Gruengard (1981) for an elaboration of this idea.

17. This amounts to shifting the problem from the concept of action to the general concept of Intentionality (with a capital 'I'), i.e., to the problem of the relationship between representations and their objects. Searle (1992c) believes that the mind has a "natural" capacitiy to be in Intentional states — which amounts to avoiding the need to face the ontological problem previously mentioned. For an analysis of the difficulties of such a position, see Horowitz (1994).

18. The symbol '$*_{PSI}$ p' is "a dummy, which represents a specific mood-indicator which corresponds to the propositional attitude PSI-ing (whichever it may be)" (ibid.).

19. In cases where speaker and audience do not share a language, or when the "utterance" consists in a non-conventionalized gesture, *x* does not possess semantic or syntactic properties that are recognizable by the audience. In such cases, the possibility of communication depends upon some other kind of *f*.

20. Searle's theory of action contains other useful elements for pragmatics. For instance, the distinction between generalized intention, prior intention and intention-in-action, which seems to exemplify the three levels of (presumably extra-linguistic) context involved in pragmatic interpretation (section 4).

21. For relatively recent developments and applications of this programme, see for example Cohen et al, eds. (1990), Clark (1992), Pereira and Grosz, eds. (1994).

22. The converse position, namely the reduction of pragmatics to semantics, was held, among others by Montague (1974). The result of this and other similar attempts has been a very limited recycling of the contents of the pragmatic wastebasket, and therefore cannot claim to be able to account for the whole set of pragmatic phenomena.

Chapter 2

Conversational relevance

In everyday life, in science and in philosophy, we often express judgments of relevance: fact *a* is relevant to fact *b*, theory *c* is relevant to action *d*, statement *e* is irrelevant to belief *f*, etc. And we often have a great measure of confidence in such judgments, since we are ready to base important decisions upon them (e.g., in the courtroom, when an objection concerning the irrelevance of a question is either sustained or rejected by the judge) and, when necessary, we are willing to engage in serious disputes about the truth of such judgments (e.g., a doctoral committee discussing about the relevance of the second chapter of a dissertation).

In philosophy, the concept of relevance or one of its close relatives is often encountered at the bottom of the efforts to solve central philosophical problems and to analyze fundamental concepts: induction, verifiability, synonymy, knowledge, natural kinds.

But when used by philosophers, scientists or the layman, this concept is seldom clearly defined or characterized. Some take it to be hopelessly vague and therefore useless in serious endeavors. Others will consider the recourse to such a concept in any theory as an avowal of failure. I believe relevance is a fundamental notion for science, philosophy and everyday life, a notion that is clamoring for attention and analysis of its several characteristics as well as of its innumerable applications. The present chapter focuses on one such application.

H.P. Grice, in his widely circulated William James lectures (1968; 1975) makes use of the concept of relevance as one of the key elements in the account of the 'logic of conversation'. According to him, conversation is governed by a general principle of cooperation:

> (CP) Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged (1975: 45).

Let us leave aside, for the moment, the question of the justification or need for such a principle. On the assumption that it is in fact justifiable, Grice goes on

to distinguish four 'categories', Quantity, Quality, Relation and Manner, into which the various specific maxims derived from the CP will be classified. These categories can be represented by four 'super-maxims', which are alleged corollaries of the CP (1975: 45-46):

> (QN) "Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange)".
> (QL) "Try to make your contribution one that is true".
> (R) "Be relevant".
> (M) "Be perspicuous".

Whereas Grice is able to specify certain maxims associated with QN, QL and M, thus clarifying somehow their meaning, R is left by him in a disparagingly vague state, which the examples given of its use do not help to dispel. Grice fully acknowledges this fact and indicates some of the difficulties that a better formulation of R ought to overcome (1975: 46):

> ... its formulation conceals a number of problems which exercise me a good deal; questions about what different kinds and focuses of relevance there may be, how these shift in the course of a talk exchange, how to allow for the fact that subjects of conversation are legitimately changed, and so on. I find the treatment of such questions exceedingly difficult, and I hope to revert to them in a later work.

As far as I know, the hope here expressed was not yet fulfilled. With no pretension to solve these really thorny problems, I will make an attempt to pinpoint some aspects of the concept or concepts of relevance required in Grice's framework. I must warn you that I will raise more problems than I will be able to solve. Yet, I hope that in so doing, not *only* something will be gained by way of rendering super-maxim R more explicit, but also that some contribution will be made to a better understanding and re-structuration of the whole framework. For, as many of Grice's examples indicate, there is a sense in which a certain concept of relevance, perhaps not identical with the one required for R, governs the operation of the other super-maxims, as if the CP itself were in fact a principle of 'relevance' rather than a principle of 'cooperation'. It is probably this fact that led Grice to admit that: "…I am fairly sure that I cannot reach it [i.e., a justification for the CP] until I am a good deal clearer about the nature of relevance and of the circumstances in which it is required" (ibid). Although I will not be able, within the limits of this paper, to fully develop this line of thought, I believe the distinctions I propose here are generalizable and, thus, useful for such a further development.

My main contention will be that it is indispensable to distinguish several types of relevance in order to provide an adequate account of the operation of maxim R. In particular, these types should include two quite distinct notions of relevance, a 'pragmatic' and a 'semantic' one. The former has to do with the relevance of speech acts to certain goals; its characterization may thus be viewed as a specialization of the general notion of relevance of an action to a goal which is an essential piece of the theory of goal directed behavior, itself a part of the much desired 'general theory of action'. The latter concerns the relevance of certain linguistic, logic, or cognitive entities, say, 'propositions', to other entities of the same type; its characterization, which involves concepts such as reference, 'aboutness', meaning relations, entailment, etc., is, to my mind, a fundamental task of semantic theory. The interaction of these two types of relevance in the generation of 'Conversational implicatures' via the violation of super-maxim R illustrates the intricate relationship that must obtain between the 'semantic' and the 'pragmatic' components of an adequate 'grammar' of any natural language.[1]

Grice's main purpose in building his system of maxims is to put it to use in order to account for the widespread occurrence of what he calls 'conversational implicatures'. Consider some of his examples (those involving, in his account, the use of R):

(1) A and B are talking about a mutual friend C who is working in a bank. A asks B how C is getting on in his job, and B replies: "Oh quite well, I think; he likes his colleagues, and he hasn't been to prison yet".
Implicature: B implicates that C is potentially dishonest.

(2) A is standing by an obviously immobilized car and is approached by B.
A: "I am out of gas".
B: "There is a garage round the corner".
Implicature: B implicates that the garage is (possibly) open and has gas to sell.

(3) A: "Smith doesn't seem to have a girl friend these days".
B: "He has been paying a lot of visits to New York lately".
Implicature: B implicates that Smith has, or may have, a girl friend in New York.

(4) At a genteel tea-party, A says "Mrs. R is an old bag". There is a moment of appalled silence, then B says "The weather has been quite delightful this summer".

> *Implicature:* B implicates that A's remark should not be discussed (or, more specifically, that A has committed a social gaffe).

Now, according to Grice, underlying each of these implicatures there is a certain (deductive) argument, involving several references to the maxim R. For example, for case 1, the implicature-generating argument is:

> *Implicature-generating argument for (1):*
> (1) B has apparently violated the maxim "Be relevant";[2] yet I have no reason to suppose that he is opting out from the operation of the CP; (2) given the circumstances, I can regard his irrelevance as only apparent if and only if I suppose him to think that C is potentially dishonest; (3) B knows that I am capable of working out step (2). So B implicates that C is potentially dishonest. ("I" here refers to the A of the example.)

We may discern here at least three *judgments of relevance,* which play an essential role in the argument; two of them apparently 'semantic' and one 'pragmatic'. First, the judgment upon which the claim that B *apparently* violated the maxim "Be relevant" is based, is a negative assessment of the relevance of *what was strictly said* by B, namely, that C has not been to prison yet (p).[3] Notice that p itself must be *really* and not only *apparently* irrelevant (at least for the hearer) in order to allow for the generation of the implicature. What is only *apparently* irrelevant is not p, but B's *utterance of p*. It is in order to show that B's utterance of p is not really irrelevant (which is required by the hypothesis that B is not opting out of maxim R), that the implicature "C is potentially dishonest" (q) is introduced as a part of the content of B's utterance. The second judgment of relevance is, then, the positive assessment of the relevance of q. This leads, finally, to the third judgment: B's utterance of p is in fact relevant because it somehow *conveys or contains* q, which is relevant. Unlike the two previous judgments of relevance, which concern certain *propositions or contents* (p and q), and are, perhaps, judgments of 'semantic' relevance, the third one concerns an utterance (which includes an act of implicating), i.e., an act, and must be, therefore, a judgment of 'pragmatic' relevance.

The considerations above offer only a very rough first sketch of the use of the concept of relevance in an implicature-generating argument, but they already hint at the complexities involved. In particular, they suggest some ways in which Grice's pattern for implicature-generating arguments might be expanded. However, consider now what is obviously missing in that sketch: it is formulated as if relevance were a monadic predicate. But it is obvious that,

whatever it may be, relevance is *at least* a dyadic predicate, a relation. Therefore, it is only possible to understand a judgment of relevance if both *relata* it relates are clearly specified. In general, the first step towards clarifying the nature of a relation is to specify its domain and its range. So far only the domains of the two kinds of relevance involved in the argument were considered (and all too briefly, for that matter): 'speech-acts' and 'propositions'. What about their ranges? Grice talks loosely about the "accepted (local) purpose or direction of a conversation" as constituting that to which B's utterance ought to be relevant. But the difficulties in identifying such (local) purposes or directions with any degree of confidence are considerable. They can range from very *specific* requests of information, as in a multiple-answer test or in a yes/no question, to very *diffuse* aims such as keeping the conversation alive.[4] Furthermore, a conversation may be highly *structured,* with a fairly definite *subject matter* to which each local purpose is hierarchically subordinated and with respect to which, ultimately, the relevance of each contribution to the conversation must be judged, or else it may lack practically any structure, its 'coherence' being maintained merely by any imaginable 'association' linking the contributions of speaker and hearer.

But even if we assume that somehow an accepted local purpose of a conversation can be properly identified, as well as the speech act that is supposed to be relevant to such a purpose, i.e., even if we manage to identify the two relata, it is still far from clear how *or in what respect* or by what *criteria* the relevance of the former to the latter ought to be assessed. On this point, Grice leaves the reader completely in the dark. To be sure, he is not very helpful, either, in what concerns the 'accepted local purposes' of conversation, for his remarks on this topic are extremely general and in his examples he invariably places upon the reader's shoulders the burden of identifying the purposes in question, by using the intransitive (monadic) formulation of the judgments of relevance. But at least, in this case, he hints to what he has in mind and to some of the problems posed by such identification. Not even such hints are available to help us determine the types and criteria of relevance that should be used in general and in each particular example. Yet, without the specification of such criteria, it seems that *any* judgment of relevance about any ordered pair (*a, b*) containing elements of the appropriate domain and range, turns out to be trivially true, and, thus, uninformative. For such an unspecified judgment may only mean "There is at least one respect in which a is relevant to b" and, given the notorious vagueness of the (general) notion of

relevance, *some* respect in which a is relevant to b can always be found, thus making the judgment in question always true.[5] Unless some way of blocking such a conclusion is found, the notion of relevance is utterly useless for the derivation of conversational implicatures. For, if all judgments of relevance are trivially true, then no judgment of irrelevance is true, and therefore, you cannot even get started in the process of generating an implicature, whose first step is precisely a judgment of *irrelevance*! Using Goodman's (1972) phrase, we could call the need for blocking the above conclusion the 'requirement of selectivity'.

The natural way to fulfill such a requirement seems, then, to be the specification of the set of legitimate 'respects' in which d's relevance to b is to be assessed in each case, the definition of criteria of assessment for each of these 'respects', and the establishment of a procedure for determining which of them is actually used in a given context. Now, the task of replacing the vague and comfortable notion of relevance by something that even remotely approaches the precision suggested by the term 'criterion' is notoriously difficult. Attempts to do so in other areas were doomed to failure — the outstanding example being the sad story of the 'criteria of empirical significance' (see Dascal 1971b). In the light of these failures, one critic affirmed that "relevance is not a precise logical category" and that "the word is used to convey an essentially vague idea" (Berlin 1938-39: 21). No wonder that Grice does not even try to formulate his maxim more precisely. But this alleged vagueness of the notion of relevance stands in sharp contrast to the undeniable fact, that implicatures are generated in a very precise and generally reliable way. It is precisely *that* particular q, from a myriad of imaginable alternatives, that is implicated and recognized as such.[6] I have in fact tested some of the examples with several people, including my ten-years-old daughter, and almost invariably they reach similar conclusions concerning what (if anything) has been implicated by the speaker in each case. Furthermore, implicatures are widely used in diplomatic exchanges as a very sophisticated means of conveying carefully nuanced and precise messages (consider the case of the White House's "condemnation of all foreign intervention in Lebanon" accompanied by the spokesman's refusal to condemn explicitly the Syrian intervention there).

The problem we face, then, is the following: how can such precise 'messages' as the implicatures be conveyed *via* a reasoning that makes essential use of such an imprecise notion as relevance? To be sure, there are several ways to

escape from this problem: for example, to deny that the implicatures are in fact as precise as I have suggested in cases where the maxim R is involved; or to deny that maxim R is at all involved in implicatures, explaining its apparent uses by means of some other principle, which does not contain the notion of relevance. I reject both escape routes. The first one, because of my experience concerning the reliability and precision of the implicatures; the second one, because my intuition as a speaker (and human agent, in general) is that we (humans) indeed base our conclusions (about implicatures, among other things) on implicit judgments of relevance, and, furthermore, that we are in fact very good at it. The task of theory — pragmatic theory and semantic theory, in the case of linguistic actions — is to make this competence of ours explicit. Admittedly, even though we do perform judgments of relevance, some other explanation of the implicatures apparently generated through maxim R might be offered. Nevertheless, not only such other explanations are hardly available, but even if they were, they should anyhow be connected with the phenomena we describe naturally in terms of relevance. Hence, the role of this concept in this area of research is worth exploring anyway.

In order to reduce the problem to manageable proportions, let us assume that a conversation is a two-utterance dialog between speakers A and B in context C. Let us say that A's utterance sets up a certain *conversational demand* (for B), and that B's utterance is B's *reaction* to that demand, in the context C.

Such a description of the situation involves some further simplifying assumptions. Let us say that something is *topically relevant* at time t for a subject S if it is at the center or focus of S's field of attention at t. What is not topically relevant, but is still somewhere in the field of attention of S, say, in its 'horizon', will be said to be *marginally relevant* for S at t.[7] One must, of course, add that, beyond the horizon of the field of attention there is a domain of stored data which might be referred to as the *background,* whose members are *potentially relevant* (in various degrees) for S at t. It must be recalled, that the relationship between these three levels of relevance (and there might be more) is not static but dynamic, since data are constantly moving from one to the other.

Now, it seems natural to assume that the conversational demand set up by A's utterance at t is topically relevant for B at t + 1, whereas B's perception of the other elements of the context is merely marginally relevant for him. It seems also natural to suppose that what is topically relevant is what primarily

commands a subject's conscious reactions. Certainly an utterance is a conscious reaction. Therefore, B's utterance can be described (primarily) as a reaction to the demand set up by A's utterance. It is also a reaction to the context, to be sure, but only 'secondarily'. And it is certainly influenced by what we called the 'background', but one cannot say that it is *commanded* primarily by it. Among other things, this predominance of the conversational demand plays an important role in determining which of the marginally and potentially relevant data will become, in turn, topically relevant, as elements which are likely to be used in the reaction. What these sketchy, phenomenologically oriented distinctions allow one to do is, in Quine's words, to start to "cut through the jungle of possible motives [I would say stimuli] to the volunteering of sentences" (from an unpublished lecture). This is only the beginning, though. We will have to cut much more in order to be able to pair reactions with conversational demands.

This beginning, however, seems to be well justified empirically, since it can already be put to use to account for some implicatures. There is indeed a general presumption that our reactions should be commanded by what is topically relevant. Normally, conversational demands are topically relevant, whenever they are present. That is to say, participation in a conversation monopolizes or should normally monopolize our attention, other things being equal. But this is not always the case. Suppose, for example, that Socrates and Meno are engaged in a conversation in the agora and it suddenly begins to rain. This new stimulus is likely to become topical for both of them, replacing the current conversational demand. It would be expected, then, to command the ensuing reaction. In that case, a comment "the weather has been so nice these days" would be perfectly appropriate as a reaction to the non-conversational demand set up by the 'intrusion' of the rain into the conversation and it would not, therefore, generate any implicature. In other words, a 'shift of subject' (at least a momentary one) should be expected in this case. If, on the contrary, Meno insists on producing a linguistic reaction which is relevant to the previous conversational demand alone, deliberately and ostensively disregarding the obvious interruption, this fact would be likely to generate an implicature: "You see, Socrates, I am so interested in talking with you that I don't care about getting wet". If the interruption were caused by an utterance of some other speaker, Euthydemus, trying to intervene in the conversation, and Meno (deliberately and ostensively) pursued the conversation reacting

only to Socrates' utterance, this fact would be interpreted, both by Socrates and by Euthydemus as carrying an insulting implicature towards the latter.

The interpretations offered above are correct just in case one further assumes that no merely causal account of Meno's reaction is available. Suppose, for example, that he is so engrossed in thought that he does not even *feel* the drops (or, respectively, that he does not even *hear* Euthydemus' intervention). In that case, the fact that he does not react to them cannot be said to convey an implicature of the type "You see, Socrates, I am engrossed by your words…". To be sure, Meno's behavior is semiotically related to his engrossment, in the sense that it can be viewed as *a sign* of it. But it is a sign of it in the same way as my pronunciation of certain Hebrew phonemes is a sign of my South-American origin. Let us use the term 'indicate' in order to refer to this kind of relationship. We should say, then, that no matter what I *intend* to convey, directly or *via* an implicature, when I utter certain words, my utterance *indicates that* I come from South America.[8] I have hardly any control over this fact, and my (communicative) intentions play no role in making it convey what it does in fact convey. It is precisely this feature — the lack of intentionality — that distinguishes indications (in the sense just stipulated) from implicatures. Thus, if Meno's disregard for the rain is unintentional, his behavior can at most be said to *indicate* his engrossment, but not to *implicate* it. This is why, when describing the implicature, I insisted in using the words 'deliberately and ostensively'.

In terms of the concepts we have so far introduced, the explanation for the case just envisaged lies in the fact that the rain is not topically relevant for Meno, but at most marginally relevant. Therefore, according to our suggestion, his conscious reaction cannot be described as a reaction to the rain. Hence, its relevance cannot be assessed in terms of the demands set up by the rain, so that the alleged irrelevance of his behavior relative to the rain cannot be the starting point for the derivation of an implicature. (For additional discussion of the Meno-Socrates example, see Chapter 10).

A further simplifying assumption which we shall make is that B correctly understands the conversational demand set up by A's utterance. This assumption blocks the way for a certain class of explanations of the possible apparent irrelevance of B's reaction, namely, those based on the claim that B in fact reacted to some demand other than the one really set up by A's utterance. In other words, 'misunderstanding' as an explanation of irrelevance is thereby excluded: B understood perfectly well 'the point' of A's utterance in all its

details. This includes disambiguation of homonyms (B understood that A was talking about the financial institution), correct identification of referents (the pronoun 'he' used by A refers to Smith) and also identification of the (illocutionary) 'force' of A's utterance (although A used the indicative mood, B understood perfectly well that A didn't assert anything but rather posed a question to him). You may have guessed that the utterance of A's I am talking about is "I bet you know whether he went to the bank yesterday".

Notice that the latter assumption, unlike the former, is not a 'natural' one to make in general. For the hypothesis of misunderstanding is in some cases the most natural explanation for an apparent irrelevance. Suppose, for example, that A conveyed his conversational demand to B *via* a somewhat complex implicature and B's reaction seems to be irrelevant. A would naturally think that B did not understand his point, and would, thus, take B's reaction to be *really* irrelevant, that is, non-conducive to an implicature-generating argument. Knowing this general fact about how A would first try to explain the irrelevance of B's reaction, B would understand that it would be risky to try to convey his response to A via an implicature. This means that a chain of implicatures in a conversation is unlikely to occur, because the chances of successfully implicating diminish considerably with each reiteration. Nevertheless, the assumption that excludes misunderstanding as an explanation of irrelevance is no doubt a simplifying assumption.

In order to make clearer the significance of the assumptions made so far, I would like to point out their close similarity to some interesting proposals put forth by Davidson (1973). According to him, "interpreting an agent's intentions, his beliefs and his words are parts of a single project, no part of which can be assumed to be-complete before the rest is" (1973: 315). He compares this project to the task of solving an equation with several variables. If you assign values to all of the variables but one, you will be able to solve the equation for the remaining variable. Otherwise, solution will remain indeterminate. For reasons having to do with his broader project of devising a Tarskian semantics for natural languages, Davidson restricts his discussion to three main variables: the fact that, in a given context, a speaker holds a sentence 'true', the belief(s) the speaker has in that context, and the interpretation(s) assigned to the sentence in that context. If we know that S holds p for true[9] and the correct interpretation of p, then we can correctly assign a certain belief (or set of beliefs) to S (in the context in question). Similarly, if we hold constant the belief(s) of S and the sentence p known to be held true by

him, we can determine the value of the third variable, namely, the meaning or interpretation of p. Apparently, the model for such an account was provided by the theory of action. If we want to explain why S lifted his arm, we can assign to him the desire to call someone. But this explanation presupposes in fact the assignment of a certain (set of) belief(s) to him, namely, the belief that by lifting his arm he is indeed calling someone. If we assigned to him a different desire (e.g., the desire to pick up an apple) we should assign to him a different (set of) belief(s), and vice-versa.

The cases we have been considering here disclose a similar relationship between three variables: what is topically relevant for S, the conversational demand as it is understood by S, and the interpretation of S's utterance (particularly, the determination of its implicature, if there is any). If any pair of these variables is held constant, then the 'equation' is solvable for the third, whereas if two of them are left unspecified, then the solution for the third remains indeterminate. What our two assumptions amount to is, then, no more than an attempt to devise admittedly artificial conditions under which the equation can be solved for the variable that interests us in the present paper, namely, the implicatures (which are part of the interpretation of S's utterance). The analogy with Davidson's account may be extended beyond the mere structural fact that there are three-variables equations in both cases. My second variable — the conversational demand as identified by S — is obviously a particular case of Davidson's second variable, i.e., a particular type of belief assigned to S. The inclusion of implicatures in the scope of the third variable is a natural way of extending and rendering more complete the required notion of interpretation. As for the first variable — what is topically relevant for S at t — I think it might be construed within the framework of an adequate theory of perception and attention, in such a way as to share some of the essential properties of Davidson's 'holding a sentence true'. But it would take us well beyond the scope of this paper to try to substantiate this claim. Let us rather return to our main topic.

All the preliminary work so far done has been necessary in order to circumscribe the second *relatum* of the relation of (pragmatic) relevance, that to which B's utterance is supposed to be relevant. But we don't know yet in what ways it can be relevant (or not). As a matter of fact, we don't know yet what precisely these conversational demands are. Some hints have been given above when we talked about the different kinds of disambiguation B achieved

with respect to A's utterance. These concern, on the one hand, 'semantic' disambiguation, that is, determination of the 'content' of A's utterance; and on the other, 'pragmatic' disambiguation, that is, determination of the 'force' of A's utterance.

The concept of 'force' I have in mind is fairly close to Austin's notion of 'illocutionary force', although I think it should be construed in such a way as to clear up the confusion between it and some neighboring concepts. In particular, it should be carefully distinguished from the components of the meaning of a sentence that Cohen (1973) calls "semantic modality" (Hare's (1970) "tropic") and "semantic force" (Hare's "neustic"). The former are normally conveyed in English by auxiliary verbs like 'is', 'may' and 'ought', by the use of indicative or subjunctive moods, or by certain adverbs like 'probably' and 'possibly'. The latter are usually expressed by the choice between declarative, imperative, interrogative, optative, exclamatory or performative forms. Both are characteristics of the meanings of *sentences,* not of *utterances,* as Cohen correctly stresses. The illocutionary 'forces', on the other hand, are properly assigned only to utterances. This is why I insist on classifying them as belonging to 'pragmatics'. Yet, nothing in my argument hinges on the acceptance of a well-defined borderline between semantics and pragmatics. What is needed for my purposes here is only the recognition of the fact that the interpretation of an utterance involves several layers of, say, 'meaning' (in the most general sense), each one of which may or may not be relevant to a corresponding layer of another utterance. Some of these layers are clearly semantic (e.g., the different lexical meanings of 'bank'), others may belong to a semantico-pragmatic region (e.g., the 'semantic force'), whereas others are clearly pragmatic (e.g., the 'illocutionary force').

Each one of these layers of meaning has distinctive effects upon assessments of relevance. The force of A's utterance, for example, imposes certain constraints on the relevance or appropriateness of the possible forces of B's utterance (issued in reaction to A's utterance). In other words, it is not the case that utterances of *any* kind of force are equally relevant as reactions to an utterance having a particular type of force. For example, an information question is not appropriate as a reaction to an information question unless it is a clarifying question, that is, a request for clarification of the prior question. This is a kind of 'force' that is defined, to be sure, in terms of a peculiar 'semantic' relationship between the contents of B's and A's utterances: the former must be *about* the meaning of some component of the latter, or of

some detail of its structure. A typical device for formulating this kind of question is the 'operator' 'What do you mean by_____?', where the blank is to be filled by some word of the previous sentence. Since a clarifying question is a kind of reaction appropriate for every conversational demand, the operator just mentioned could be used in any conversational context in order to produce *relevant* reactions. This fact was exploited in the computer program ELIZA, which simulates a psychotherapist interviewing his patient (Weizenbaum 1966). But even in such a very characteristic setting, some questions formed by means of the device in question would be apparently irrelevant, thus generating implicatures. Suppose, for example, that the program reacted 'What do you mean by 'the' (or, 'to')?" to the patient's statement "I used to go to the pool". On the other hand, a reaction with the force "answer to information request" is, as far as its *force* is concerned, clearly relevant to an utterance whose force is "information question". Whenever a reaction is relevant to the force of an utterance, let us say that it is 'pragmatically relevant' to the demand.

The differences in the (illocutionary) forces of utterances, which characterize the kinds of reaction they belong to, are sometimes conveyed linguistically through intonation, in fairly standard ways. For example (cf. Gunter 1974: 60ff.):

(5) A: What did he drink?
B: 3 Tea l↓
(kind of reaction: answer to information request)

(6) B: 3 Tea 1↑
(kind of reaction: uncredulous guess)

(7) A: Nobody is in the house.
B: 3 John 1↑
(kind of reaction: dissent plus complementation)
(meaning: "You forget John")

(Notice that in all these cases the 'semantic force', as opposed to the 'illocutionary force', is the same, namely, 'declarative', or 'assertive'. Consider also the following: correcting, amending, exploring, recapitulating, asserting, justifying, exploring, threatening, warning. All of them have different forces and constitute different kinds of reaction but they all have the same 'semantic force'.) But intonation alone does not determine by itself the force of a given

reaction. It combines, in fact, with information about the semantic relationships obtaining between the two utterances and about the nature of the demand. Compare examples 8, 9 and 5.

(8) A: John drank wine.
B: 3 Tea 1↓
(kind of reaction: dissent, with correction)[10]

(9) A: John drank tea.
B: 3 Tea 1↓
(kind of reaction: recapitulation)

All these reactions have the same intonation; therefore, the undeniable differences between the forces are determined either by the differences in the semantic relations (TEA-TEA identity; WINE-TEA opposition; example 8 vs. example 9) or by differences in type of *demand* (example 5 vs. example 8).

Furthermore, pragmatic relevance alone does not settle the question of the relevance or irrelevance of the reaction to the demand. In many cases, the demand is much more specific. It requires a certain kind of reaction having a certain (kind of) content. That is, it requires also 'semantic' relevance, in one or more of its components. Now, if both the force and the content of the reaction, including all its required components, match the demand (in the case of a specific demand such as the one set up, say, by a yes/no question), then we can say that the reaction (as a whole) 'satisfies' the demand. In this case, it is *maximally relevant* to it, and no implicature will be generated. If, on the other hand, no component of the reaction matches the demand, then the former is *totally irrelevant* to the latter, in which case too no implicature can be generated. Only if some components are irrelevant, whereas others are relevant, can an implicature arise. Exactly which one will in fact occur is something that depends, *in an orderly way*, on the discrimination of the relevant and irrelevant components, respectively.

In the light of the preceding remarks, one might generalize the suggestions made above concerning the 'equation-like' nature of the problem faced by someone who has to get at some implicature *via* the maxim R. Instead of three variables, there would be many more variables, interconnected not by a single equation but by a system of equations. Ideally, we would like to have a system in which each equation connected only two or more variables of the same kind, related to the demand and to the reaction: illocutionary force with illocutionary force, semantic force with semantic force, modality with modal-

ity, etc. Unfortunately, as we have seen, this is not so, and the equations are likely to be not only of mixed types but also much less precise than algebraic equations. Their solution, therefore, cannot be expected to be obtained by the application of some neat algorithm, which the theory of implicatures — i.e., the 'logic of conversation', in Grice's phrase — is supposed to discover. It seems to me more realistic to look at the problem in a different way.

The hearer who faces a (possible) implicature can be compared to a player in a game. His task is to discover the implicature, if there is any — and this too he is supposed to discover. Now, an implicature is a *hypothesis* about the speaker's intentions that *explains away* the apparent irrelevance of his utterance, by explaining how the utterance is in fact relevant. So, the task of the hearer is similar to the task of a scientist who looks for a theory that explains given data, under certain broad theoretical assumptions (comparable to the maxim R or the CP). But we all know that, at least for the time being, there is no 'method of discovery' or 'abductive logic' that would help him to find the appropriate hypothesis. Similarly, the 'computation' of an implicature is not really a computation or a valid deductive argument, in spite of Grice's attempt to present it as such.[11] For the whole argument stands or falls with the truth or falsity of premise (C) (in the pattern — cf. footnote 11) or (2) in example 1, especially with its 'only if' clause. But an account or justification of how the hearer hits upon that precise q, which will ultimately establish the missing link of relevance between his reaction and the conversational demand, is unavailable in Grice's theory, and likely to be eternally unavailable if what we look for is a (deductive) logical account. For, finding q is precisely an *abductive* problem, not a deductive nor an inductive one. But again, without such an account, no explanation is given for the basic fact that implicatures are used, and in a fairly reliable way. Certainly a mere 'trial and error' procedure or 'brute force' strategy could not explain that fact, for too much time would be necessary in order to test all the hypotheses that might occur to the hearer. He needs some procedure for pre-selecting those hypotheses that are worth testing. And the speaker needs to know what is the procedure — particularly, in what order the hypotheses are going to be tested — in order to trust that the implicatures he wants to convey will be properly understood.

Such a procedure might be a *heuristics*. A set of (at least partially) ordered rules that would provide the hearer (and the speaker) with the instruments for *guessing* (rather than *deducing)* the implicatures, but for guessing them in an 'educated' or 'systematic', rather than haphazard, way. These

rules should, among other things, exploit the first step in the argument to the maximum (the detection of the irrelevance of the reaction to the demand). Although this step is not explicitly formulated in Grice's pattern, its role is fundamental in the argument. It triggers the whole process of searching for an implicature (if there is any — and it is *this* first judgment that will decide whether there is any or not). And in so doing, it pre-orients the process in a certain direction; it creates, so to speak, guidelines for the search. Among other things, these guidelines suggest what kind of contextual features to focus upon, thus avoiding the need for a search through all of the infinitely many faces of the 'context'. Partly, this is achieved because this first assessment of irrelevance is not just *global* and indiscriminate, but rather a quite *detailed* one that indicates precisely what aspects of B's reaction are irrelevant. The general distinction between pragmatic and semantic factors, with the subsequent necessary characterization of the various layers of the latter (semantic force, modality, meaning connections, aboutness, etc.), should provide part of the instruments for making such carefully discriminative irrelevance (or relevance) judgments.

Consider a few examples:

(10) A: Why did John beat Mary?
B: Why not?
(a) Identification of demand: "B is to fill in the gap: 'John beat Mary because...'".
(b) Check for force: question.
Inadequate, unless it is a clarifying question.
(c) Is it a clarifying question?
Condition: only if content relates to content of demand.
(d) Check content: Content may be related to content of demand in the form of a Generalized request of information about the class of sentences that could be used in order to fill in the gap.

Implicature 1: "What kind of explanation are you looking for?" or "Why should it be explained at all?" or "What is there to be explained?"

If this interpretation holds water (and it should be checked against intonational data), then the above implicature is generated at this stage.[12]

(e) If the former interpretation is not satisfactory, check for other possible forces.

Implicature 2: Refusal to accept the presupposition that there is something to explain in connection with A's question.[13]

(f) If that does not work, try another possible force.
Implicature 3: Refusal to answer (meaning: It is none of your business).

Notice that one is led to implicature 3 only if *no* content connection is found. Compare with:

(11) A: Why did John beat Mary?
B: Why are two and two four?
B's reply in this case cannot be a clarifying question, given the total lack of content connection between the demand and the reaction. Yet, it conveys a different implicature. Something like "The answer to your question is obvious". This was obtained apparently through a transfer of the characteristics of the second question to the first one. A kind of mimicry is involved here.

Consider finally:

(12) A: Why did John beat Mary?
B: What is the solution to Fennat's problem?
Here the implicature would be perhaps that it is impossible to answer the question.

These examples show how the identification of the type of irrelevance leads to 'educated' guesses about the hypothesis that will explain away the identified irrelevance. The 'confirmation' of the hypothesis depends on the context. The need for such a confirmation guides the interpreter in his scanning of contextual features (as the sense of a referential expression guides him into looking for individuals of a certain kind and not another). In this way, the range of 'contextual' phenomena that must be scanned by the interpreter is significantly reduced by the heuristic procedure.

It would be too much to claim that the heuristic rules are applied in a strict order, but some sort of an order is certainly present.

Consider example 3. Grice does not offer an explanation for the generation of the implicature in this case, declaring it "obvious" in the light of example 2. Yet, it seems to me that the two examples differ significantly. In example 2 there is a clear 'semantic' relation between the terms 'garage' and 'selling gas'. If indeed there is an implicature in that case, it must have been generated — in the absence of further details — through the mediation of such a relation. (Actually I doubt whether it should be considered an example of implicature, any more than when someone says that John is a bachelor he

implicates that John is unmarried. When the semantic connection is obvious, the relevance is obvious and there is no need to make use of the principles of conversation in order to give a satisfactory explanation of the utterance.) But in example 3 there is no semantic relation between Smith's frequent visits to New York and his having a girl friend there. And A's statement alone ("Smith doesn't seem to have a girl friend these days") is not sufficient to assign to B's speech act the specific implicature mentioned in the example. For all the requirement of relevance to A's statement (which sets up the current purpose of the conversation or 'demand') allows one to conclude is that B's statement has "something to do with" or "is somehow connected with" the (alleged) fact that Smith does not have a girl friend presently. Now, this connection might be, for example, an explanatory one (Smith does not have a girl friend *because* he is very busy, going so often to N.Y.; or, in the other direction: Smith does not have a girl friend, *therefore* he goes so often to N.Y., to the prostitutes). In both cases, B is taken to *assent* to A's remark and then to go on either to justify it (reinforce it), or, taking it for granted, to use it, by exploring some of its consequences. In Grice's account of the example in question, B's attitude is taken to be of *dissent* (See (8) above: it is not true that he does not have a girl friend; he has one in New York.), but justified or informative (B gives his own evidence, probably unknown to A, for his counter-claim).

Now, it is remarkable that, once any one of these 'attitudes' (or kinds of force) is selected by the interpreter, the set of possible implicatures is considerably reduced. If the attitude is of assent, for example, then Grice's proposed implicature is no longer available. If the attitude is of dissent, on the other hand, B cannot be taken to be either justifying or exploring A's statement. If, then, in the initial judgment of irrelevance the force of the reaction is identified first (on intonation grounds, for example), this restricts enormously the number of alternative hypotheses still open for speculation.

On the other hand, contrast examples 3 and 4: in example 3 there is *some* semantic relation; both utterances are *about* Smith. In example 4 the absence of *any* semantic relation blocks the way to identifying the response as having the force 'assent'.

To the heuristic rules hinted here, one should add Grice's other supermaxims, which are, to my mind, subordinated to the general maxim of relevance. Furthermore, one could lift the simplifying assumptions made above, thus making available further types of possible explanations of irrelevance, which should be checked *before* the other types of explanation we have been

discussing so far. The new heuristic rules to be introduced by lifting the simplifying assumptions would be, roughly:

(T) Check for topical relevance.
(M) Check for correct identification of demand.

These two rules would allow to explain implicatures generated in the case of Socrates and Meno described above,[14] as well as cases of 'misunderstanding' (see Chapter 14). Consider, finally, Hilary Putnam's example:

(13) A: Why did you rob the bank?
B: Because that's where the money is!

In this case, the irrelevance of B's reply to the demand set up by A's utterance (i.e., A's expectations concerning a possible explanation for whatever it is that he wants to be explained) could be explained away by means of rule M, whose application might lead to the result: "B misunderstood the demand by incorrectly 'reading' the stress in A's utterance as placed upon *bank* instead of upon *rob*".

* * *

In order to balance off the skepticism about the possibility of handling the notion of relevance in a theoretically fruitful way with which I opened this paper, let me conclude with a much more optimistic note:

> Relevance is not something mystical; it is a product of the facts of sentences — facts that are clearly within the domain of linguistics. Relevance is, moreover, the phenomenon that leads humans to converse; thus it must be accounted of supreme importance in the working of language in human affairs (Gunter 1974: 53).

Although I do not agree with the simplification embodied in the claim that relevance is in *the facts of sentences alone,* I share the general optimism of this remark. The task of constructing a satisfactory explication of the notion of relevance, especially where confined to particular types and well-defined areas, is not too hopeless. I hope that this paper has at least posed some problems and suggested some paths for such an explication to follow.

Notes

1. Moreover, the distinction between the two types of relevance and the consideration of the multiple ways in which they may interact provide a vantage point from which several problems in the philosophy of language (e.g., translation, synonymy), in the philosophy of science (e.g., induction, explanation) and in the theory of knowledge (e.g., the so-called Gettier counter-examples) can be fruitfully reassessed.

2. One might argue that it is the maxim of quantity that has been apparently violated in this case: B has gone into too much detail, etc. This shows how closely R is related to the other maxims.

3. By 'what is strictly said' when one utters a sentence p in context C, I mean the standard literal interpretation 'normally' assigned to the sentence p in C. The modifier 'strictly' is required because 'what is said' is too broad in the sense that it may be used also to describe what is implicated through the utterance of p in a given context.

4. Compare the notion of *diffuse vs. specific* significance of social objects in general, introduced by Parsons, Shils and Olds (1962: 59-60). The failure to pay attention to the distinction between the local and the general purpose of a conversation leads to some mistakes in Grice's analyses (e.g., the analysis of example 4, 1975: 54).

5. In this respect, 'is relevant to' behaves very much like 'is similar to' (cf., for example, Quine 1969: 116-121).

6. It should be noted, however, that the degree of precision with which an implicature is generated is not so high as to be viewed as the conclusion of a conclusive deductive argument. In particular, I think Grice is wrong in introducing an *only if* clause as one of the premises of his implicature-generating arguments (see, for example, step (2) in the implicature-generating argument for example 1). Certainly, explanations other than B's believing precisely a given q for the apparent lack of relevance of B's utterance could be available in the specified circumstances. The implicature-generating argument should rather be viewed as a case of loose reasoning or of reasoning with loose concepts; in any case, not as a strictly deductive argument. I shall return to this point later.

7. The use of the pairs of terms 'topic' and 'comment', 'thema' and 'rhema', 'new' and 'old' (information) by linguists should not be confused with my terminology here. Whereas these terms are used to describe features of the internal structure of an utterance (or even of a sentence), mine refer to the field of attention or 'short term memory' of a speaker-hearer. An utterance u as a whole, no matter what its internal structure, may be topically relevant at t for S; later on, say at t + 1, the 'old' information (the 'topic') of u may become marginally relevant for S; if, at the same time, S concentrated his attention on u's 'new' information (the 'comment'), it then becomes topically relevant for him. Further elaboration of these notions can be found in Chapter 10.

8. Some authors employ the term 'express' for what I call 'indicate'. Unfortunately, I can think of no term that would refer only to the unintentional conveying of something, thus being free from the ambiguity of 'indicate', 'express' and the like.

9. Davidson is right in claiming some sort of 'evidential priority' for holding a sentence true *vis-à-vis* interpreting it, on the grounds that one may know that someone holds a sentence true without knowing how the sentence is to be interpreted. I pointed out (independently) the same fact and discussed some of its implications in Dascal (1975a).

10. One might improve upon the present account by admitting some sort of internal structure to the 'forces' or 'kinds of reaction' here described. Thus, for example, we might consider the dissent in this case to be supervenient on the correction. The force might then be described as correction, therefore dissent.

11. The general pattern of such arguments is, according to Grice (with minor modifications): (a) he has said that p; (b) there is no reason to suppose that he is not observing the maxims, or at least the CP; (c) he could not be doing this unless he thought that q; (d) he knows (and knows that I know that he knows) that q is required; (e) he has done nothing to stop me thinking that q; therefore (f) he intends me to think, or at least is willing to allow me to think, that q; and so (g) he has implicated that q.

12. A further question is whether the presupposition of the clarifying question, namely, that A's original question is unclear, is also implicated. I have no definite intuitions about this. What is beyond doubt, however, is the fact that the *rejection* of presuppositions of a question is, in general, an appropriate *reaction* to the question. The fact that such a rejection can be conveyed, either explicitly or by means of an implicature suggests another possible interpretation of the apparent irrelevance of the 'why not?' reply. This will be put to use in step d below.

13. Notice that in this case a semantic relation, namely, presupposition, combines with considerations pertaining to the level of pragmatic relations in order to generate the implicature.

14. Strictly speaking, a negative result of the application of rule T would eventually trigger a search for causal factors of B's utterance. This might lead to the interpretation of the utterance in terms of what it *indicates* rather than of what it *implicates*.

Chapter 3

Strategies of understanding

> *... the first player can start the game in nine different ways. On the next move, the second player has eight choices, after which the first player has seven choices. Now the number of ways in which the first player can specify what he will do on the third move in response to each of the other's choices is 78 ... On the ninth move, however, the first player can do only one thing, namely put a naught in the only box left. Thus the number which is sufficient to encompass all of the first player's strategies is* $9 \times 7^8 \times 5^6 \times 3^4 = 65.664.686.390.625$ *... However large the number of strategies, they are not infinite ...*
>
> Anatol Rapoport, speaking of TIC-TAC-TOE).

1. As I set out to write about my present understanding of the relationship between meaning and understanding, it strikes me that my predicament, being itself the result of a (largely unsuccessful) attempt to *understand,* can at least shed some light on the problems any adequate account of understanding must overcome. Let me begin by describing some aspects of this predicament.

1.1 Before I complete this paper, I don't really know what I am going to say. Of course, I have a *plan* — quite an elaborate one, for that matter; but there are many details and open ends to be somehow completed, and I have no idea of how I will handle them. Well, one might say, this has nothing to do with your understanding the topic you are going to write about. Basically, you understand it. Your problem is just one of formulation and specification of some details. But what about my situation just before I wrote the plan? Could I then claim to have an understanding of the topic? No doubt — would the objector say — there can be no difference *in your understanding* between instant t, when the plan is in your mind, and t + 1 when it is written down on paper, since understanding has to do with what is in your mind alone. Maybe. But

this is not completely convincing. For I feel there is much more than a purely external connection of 'putting into words what is in the mind' between my understanding of something and my ability to formulate it linguistically. In a sense, that ability is neither a matter of just expressing my understanding, nor of merely enhancing it: it seems to constitute a part of the understanding in question, and surely not a marginal one.

Although I do not believe that there is an absolute symmetry between production and reception of speech, it seems to me that the same intimate connection between understanding and formulation occurs also in reception. Many comprehension tests require the subjects to express "in their own words" what they understood, say, of a story they just read, and such tests seem to be quite effective. One might claim that the ability to paraphrase, displayed by subjects in these tests, is not itself a part of their understanding, but rather a *manifestation* of it. On this view, understanding would be some sort of underlying process or state — maybe a disposition distinct from its manifestations (one of which would be the ability to paraphrase). This seems plausible (in spite of well-known difficulties involving such underlying theoretical constructs), but it does not account for the feeling, expressed by many, that until you don't actually produce a paraphrase "in your own words" you don't really understand — which suggests that formulation is *constitutive* of understanding rather than being its mere outer manifestation.

If this is true, i.e., if the usual model, which represents the relationship between formulation and understanding as purely external, is incorrect, one needs a thorough revision of that model and a new account of the nature of the relationship in question. But even before such an account is offered it is quite clear that formulation must be at least viewed as one of the strategies operative in the very *achievement* of understanding. This perspective no doubt sheds a new light on the role of formulation, but it also renders the actual formulating a harder task, by investing it with heavier responsibilities.

1.2 Let us now go back in time, to the beginning of my inquiry into the nature of understanding, far before I face the problem of formulating my findings. At this moment, I really don't know what understanding is. How do I know, then, where to begin my search and how to proceed? Which facts, theories, beliefs, objects, habits, etc., out of the multitude of those I am acquainted with, should I select for close examination? The answer, of course, is: "Those which have a bearing on understanding". But to know what is

relevant to understanding is already to know quite a lot about understanding; presumably this will be one of the findings of the research, whereas I am just trying to get off the ground in my inquiry. So, O. K., you don't know what is in fact relevant to understanding before you understand understanding, but you don't have to know that in order to begin your inquiry. It is enough that you *guess* what might be relevant. Of course, this shouldn't be a completely wild guess, which might lead you to engage in a brute trial-and-error process whose chances of convergence would be quite small. You certainly have some cues to orient your guesses. You don't start really from scratch. You have some pre-theoretical, pre-analytical or intuitive understanding of understanding. If you don't recall the meaning of the word, there are dictionaries. A good starting point would be to hypothesize that whatever is mentioned in the dictionary definition of 'understanding' is relevant to the understanding of understanding. You might look into those things.

Another possibility is to examine instances of understanding. These should not be difficult to gather, since if you know the meaning of the word, you ought to be able to determine, at least in principle, to which things it applies (i.e., what is its 'reference' or 'extension'). Again, the actual use of the above 'in principle' ability might require too much understanding of understanding. But here too, approximate, rather than absolutely correct identification of instances is sufficient *as a guess* to start with. Once your inquiry is completed, you may even reject part of your initial instances as cases of merely 'apparent' understanding. In particular, among the instances considered, I might wish to include some episodes that happened to me, cases in which I think I had the so-called "click of comprehension" (Brown 1958: 82), or simply instances of things or events I am sure I understand. For the analysis of this type of instances, introspection, eventually refined by some techniques of phenomenology, might be the best or even the only possible method.

Notice that, at this stage, there is no way of avoiding certain methodological issues: Does introspection yield acceptable data or not? How do we recognize whether some instance is a case of understanding or not? Is satisfaction of a set of behavioral criteria sufficient and/or necessary for attribution of understanding? The adoption of a particular methodological conception or practice with regard to these and other issues may be one of the most important factors governing not only the conduct of the inquiry, but also its very first steps as well as its results.

Another set of clues to begin with is provided by what others have said about understanding.[1] According to Descartes, the first step in any healthy investigation is to get rid of 'traditional' views, as well as of one's own prejudices, and Spinoza would classify that kind of information as yielding at most the lowest kind of knowledge, the one he calls 'by hearsay', through which one can never achieve real science. This might be good advice. For one thing: it would relieve the researcher from one of her heaviest burdens, namely the careful examination of 'the Literature' on the subject of research (sometimes also dubbed 'The State of the Art'). Yet, if one sticks to the (perhaps old fashioned) idea of progress in science, one accepts some sort of obligation to build a theory upon the shoulders — or at least upon the ruins, if one is a critical rationalist — of one's predecessors.

Extant theories about one's subject become relevant not only at the stage of theory building, however. Maybe I don't want to build my own theory, I just want to understand the nature of understanding. I am perfectly willing to accept the theory the standards of the scientific community have selected as the correct one. Let the scientific community indicate to me what is this theory, and I will gladly try to absorb it as quickly as possible in order to overcome my predicament. But I am quickly disappointed. Either there is no such a thing as *the* scientific community or else it has no single spokesman, but speaks rather in a polyphonic, often dissonant, way. The voices of the different disciplines, and within each of them those of the various schools — all claim to be in possession of the understanding I seek. In the case we are considering, in which interdisciplinarity is certainly required, nearly everybody seems to have something to say: linguistics, philosophy, psychology, 'cognitive science' (the heir of 'artificial intelligence'), sociology, anthropology, etc. Are all of them really relevant? Are all of them methodologically sound? Are their results compatible? Or, prior to that, are they comparable at all?

No doubt the choice of a particular theoretical framework would be a powerful guide in my search of understanding. But in order to choose, I have to exercise my judgment from without these frameworks (otherwise the issue would be prejudged), and I have to do that before I have reached the desired understanding (if the theoretical framework is to be the instrument for such an achievement). If I am looking for real understanding and not only for a comfortable make belief in order to end my quest, I should not commit myself to any theoretical framework before I carefully examine the alternatives available. But the amount of alternatives and the prolixity of their proponents

render the required careful examination of all, or even of most of them, prohibitive. I must find a compromise between a certain amount of openness to various alternatives and a reasonably quick choice of one or a few of them. In this choice there will be, again, an element of guess, perhaps even of gambling.

1.3 This brings us to a third aspect of the predicament. Understanding something is inseparable from relating it to other things. Bransford and McCarrell (1974: 192, 226) have illustrated this fact by showing how the same picture can be understood as representing completely different objects, by placing it in contexts where its relationship with other objects varies. In isolation, some people described a given picture as a 'bumpy lump' and others as the back of a bear's head. But in several specific contexts, no doubt could possibly arise concerning the identification of the kind of entity represented by the same picture: a hat (when on a boy's head), a chair (with a man sitting on it). A picture of a man in a car holding a small box-shaped plastic device over his chin was at first interpreted by me as "a man shaving himself with an electric razor", but the words accompanying the picture ("Even in a traffic jam you are in touch, with … Motorola") immediately transformed the electric razor into a microphone. There, the other objects present; here, the accompanying linguistic message call our attention to the relevant set of relations, necessary for the correct understanding of what is perceived. It is tempting to jump to the conclusion (as Bransford and McCarrell in fact do) that understanding is nothing but the perception of such relations. Is this conclusion plausible?

The *prima facie* plausibility of this idea comes from the relatively simple task (classification of an object in a controlled and simplified environment) taken as an example of understanding. For such a task, the 'correct' set of objects and relations is practically given, so that the problem of selecting the relevant objects and relations is thereby obviated. But this task is in fact far from simple. Broadly speaking, relations can be 'syntagmatic' or 'paradigmatic':[2] any given object bears some relation to the objects which are contiguous to it (a word is syntagmatically related to its neighbors in a sentence; a block, to the other blocks in the same room, as well as to the room itself; etc.); but it also bears some relation to non-present objects, which it somehow 'calls to mind' (a word is paradigmatically related to the words belonging to the same syntactic and semantic categories, as well as to those belonging to 'opposed', 'super-ordinate', etc. categories; a block, to those that are similar to

it in some respect; etc.). Saussure (1969: 170-171) illustrates this beautifully by depicting each word as the point of intersection of many series of other words to which it bears syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations. It is not always obvious that the syntagmatic should supersede the paradigmatic perspective in order to yield the correct understanding of some object. Recall all those games in which some purposefully wrong clues are perspicuously given: if you want to succeed, you must disregard their presence in the environment, rather than to take them as clues for understanding the situation. Mere presence is not by itself a guarantee of relevance. You must decide, among the wealth of possible paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations, which ones to pick out for understanding. In the misleadingly simple cases described above, the interesting question is *why* one picks out, without hesitation, the syntagmatic clues, leaving aside the paradigmatic ones (back of a bear's head, e.g.) considered before.

One possible answer is that we look for special kinds of relations, not just for any relations. Suppose a person has a very powerful 'associationistic' mind. Given any stimulus, the person in question is able to associate it with a lot of other things stored in her memory. Clearly, this does not mean that the associationist is also an outstanding understander. It is not the quantity of relations discovered that matters, but the quality, so to speak, of such relations. Purely associative links are, apparently, very poor in their qualitative contribution for understanding. In the case of objects and events, the relations required are, for the most part, causal and functional relations. I see that the object is *used for* sitting, hence I identify it as a chair. One understands arthritis, presumably, if one is able to diagnose it (by recognizing its symptoms, i.e., its detectable *effects*), to prognose it (to determine its future *effects*), to treat it (to act upon its *causes*, so as to remove them), etc. And, according to a quite popular account, one's understanding of an utterance requires one's ability to recognize the speaker's intention to let the hearer grasp a certain content *via* his recognition of the speaker's intention to that effect.[3] Some of these intentions are presumably the causes, at least in a teleological sense, to which the utterance is to be related if it is to be understood. Even though it is clear that the search for causal and functional relations plays a crucial role in understanding, they are far from being easily indentifiable, and they are not the only relations relevant for understanding. The problem of selection is perhaps made a little easier by the fact that there is a set of preferential relations to look for, but it is by no means thereby obviated.

Consider a rather complex object (like understanding, for example). It is related, in a natural way, to innumerable other objects, by a web of equally complex relations (including functional and causal ones). If understanding such an object is equated with perceiving all these relations, it is likely to be beyond human reach. On the other hand, if *none* of these relations is perceived, or if only a fixed small set of them is considered, understanding is no doubt seriously impaired. One has to perceive some of them, while giving up the idea of grasping them all, and one has to be reasonably sure that those you perceive are the 'right' ones. There is a point in expanding at first your 'field of search' to a lot of relations the object you try to understand bear to other familiar objects. But it would seem that one soon reaches a stage of diminishing returns, in which to add more relations complicates so much the situation that, instead of helping to achieve understanding, it only leads to a sense of confusion and hopelessness. The expansion must be followed by some contraction, eventually manifested in some tentative formulation. But if the expansion goes beyond a certain (unspecifiable) limit, then no satisfactory contraction seems to be possible any more. Again we have a case of having to strike a balance, by guesswork, between two conflicting requirements, in order to elaborate a reliable strategy for understanding.

1.4 Closely related to the former point is the question of the roles of analysis and synthesis in understanding. Descartes recommended, as a general strategy of understanding a complex issue, "to divide each one of the difficulties examined in as many parts as possible and as are required for solving them". But Leibniz pointed out that this rule is of little use, "as long as the art of division, i.e., the true Analysis, is not explained. For, if someone who does not know the juncture cuts something, he will lacerate it, rather than practice anatomy…".[4] Analysis is no doubt required for understanding, but Ziff (1972) may have gone too far in claiming that understanding is analytic data processing. He overlooked the significance of Leibniz's criticism of Descartes' second rule of method. A 'bad' analysis can do more harm than good to the understanding of something or to the solution of a problem. And a 'good' analysis presupposes that one already understands the analysandum considerably well, in order to be able to determine where its true 'junctures' lie. This prior understanding, furthermore, seems to be at once synthetic and analytic.

If the object of understanding is understanding itself, how should we decompose it? How are its true components to be recognized? In particular,

assuming that understanding involves both an analytic phase and a synthetic one, how far does each of them go, and how do they interact?

Consider, for example, the inferences that can be drawn from what has been understood. Should they be considered a part of that understanding or rather something clearly distinguishable from it? Carroll (1972: 8) claims that, in the case of understanding language, it is possible "to separate 'pure' comprehension factors (depending, respectively, on lexical knowledge, grammatical knowledge, and an ability to 'locate facts' in paragraphs) from an inferential factor requiring the examinee to go beyond the data given". Yet, the preliminary characterization of language comprehension he proposes involves two stages: "(a) apprehension of linguistic information, and (b) relating that information to wider context", and he admits that there is an inconsistency "he cannot see how to resolve at the moment" between this characterization and his earlier distinction. For "the relating of linguistic information to a wider context may indeed require processes of inference' (1972: 13). Later on, in their overview of the papers contained in the volume edited by them, Freedle and Carroll (1972: 360) implicitly withdraw from the claim that inferential processes and comprehension can be neatly distinguished. "Understanding language" — they say — "nearly always involves not only comprehending the words and grammatical structures of a message as linguistic symbols, but also taking account of those knowledges, facts, or ideas that underlie the message but are not explicitly built into it".

If one's concern is to produce a program that simulates understanding, by being able, say, to answer questions related to the data that have been fed into the system, the issue just raised might seem irrelevant. For what is important is the overall performance of the program. Yet, if you wish the program to give you some insight into human understanding processes, you must discern the contribution of each subroutine to its overall behavior. Bobrow and Brown's (1975) model, for example, includes a 'synthesist' and an 'analyst'. The former is the one that handles input data. It parses the data and tries "to impose the 'best' acceptable structure" (out of a class of structures specified by the designer) on such data. "The imposed structure accounts for the original input data in terms of concepts useful to the analyst, and provides the only mechanism through which the analyst is permitted to obtain information about the state of the world" (115). As a result of the synthesist's work, the program keeps an up to date "contingent knowledge structure (CKS)", which "represents the understander's knowledge of the state of the world" (117). The

analyst, on the other hand, is an inference mechanism for bridging the gap between the finite set of the properties of the world which are explicitly represented in the CKS, and the infinite set of valid assertions (answers to questions) about the world which are implicitly determined by the CKS" (121). It is not hard to imagine how many arbitrary decisions as to what is done by each of these components have to be taken in the actual implementation of the program. Furthermore, it is worthwhile to notice that neither the 'synthesist' nor the 'analyst' are 'pure' devices, since each one of them performs in fact both analysis and synthesis. Thus, the 'synthesist' is supposed to identify the 'logical subject' of a sentence (a typically analytic task of decomposition), but it does that by relying on heuristic information of various sorts and by taking into account the global structure of the sentence (typically synthetic requirements). And the 'analyst' integrates widely separate elements of the CKS in order to draw correct inferences. In general, there is much confusion not only concerning the roles of analysis and synthesis in our cognitive processes, but also concerning the precise characterization of these concepts. A careful examination of the philosophical tradition on this matter might be of value in this connection.[5]

Granted that *some* inferences are part of the understanding itself, how many and which ones? If I am told that yesterday John bought a book from Jane, I might be expected to infer immediately that today John has a book. But am I also expected to infer immediately that Jane has no books any more (since I know she had only one book), that she was punished by her parents (because the book she sold for one dollar was a 1664 edition of *La Logique ou l'Art de Penser*, which was in her eyes just an old book), etc.? One might assume that the latter inferences would only be drawn if some circumstance would arise in which I would have to draw them, e.g., if I were asked today "Does Jane have any books?" or "Why is she crying?". Some of the synthesis involved in drawing inferences would then be only goal- or task-induced, and not inherent to the understanding process itself.[6]

Other kinds of synthetic abilities an understander is supposed to have might seem even more remote from mere uptake and preliminary analysis of data. Consider, for example, the ability to summarize one's understanding of something. It is plausible to conjecture that such an ability is so different from the analytic abilities involved in 'passive' understanding that, although related, they belong in fact to two distinct types of understanding. One might wish then to distinguish between 'active' and 'passive' understanding, along

these lines. But the mere invention of two different names does not contribute to make the borderline between these types less vague.

At this point, it is tempting to abandon altogether the idea that there is some such borderline, and to claim instead that there are *degrees of understanding*, roughly proportional to the amount of inferences (related to the object of understanding) one is able to draw.[7] Although I favor such a proposal, I am aware of its shortcomings. First, inferences are drawn not from the object of understanding alone, but from the object of understanding in conjunction with other premises. If no constraints are put on these other premises, one can obtain any number of inferences for any given object of understanding, and the idea of measuring 'degree of understanding' by 'number of inferences' becomes utterly useless. But the nature of such constraints is far from clear: truth would be too much to require, and belonging to the understander's set of beliefs, too little. Second, even if only inferences based on somehow 'admissible' further premises are considered, the sheer increase in their number might have a negative rather than a positive effect on understanding, due to increase in complexity, of the kind discussed in paragraphs 2 and 3 above. Third, at the lower level, it is hard to discern what is inferential and what is not. For Descartes, even perception is an inferential process. Others stress the non-inferential character not only of perception, but also of categorization ('perceiving something *as* an F') and interpretation of signs (I *hear* the meaning of a word when I hear the word; I *see* anger in your face; and even I *hear* a promise in your 'I will come tomorrow').

1.5 The problems raised so far, which are typical of an attempt to understand understanding, may not plague the understanding of simpler objects. It may be argued that understanding understanding is a *theoretical* enterprise, to be pursued only by some highly trained people using a special methodology, while understanding an utterance, for example, is a non-theoretical endeavor, achieved without effort by every single human being, countless times a day. Hence, the study of the former would not shed any light on the latter. It remains to be seen whether indeed the gap between these enterprises is as big as suggested by the preceding remark. It seems to me that, quite on the contrary, the issues of formulation and pre-analytic understanding, of criteria of relevance for the selection of contextual features, conceptual frameworks and the like, of the influence of methodological options, of the size and nature of the relational expansion necessary for understanding, of the ro1e of analysis

and synthesis, of whether understanding is a matter of degree or an all-or-none achievement, are issues that arise for every type of understanding I can think of. Yet, although the understander must face these issues every time he tries to understand something, it is characteristic of them that they do not afford a general solution, applicable to all particular cases. The reason for that is that the understander who faces such issues is not confronted with conflicting solutions to a well-defined problem, but rather with alternative strategies to cope with an ill-defined task. Each particular case may require a different strategic decision. And the different strategies can complement rather than oppose each other. Hence it is misleading to compare understanding with deciphering, as some authors have done (cf. Ziff 1972). Deciphering is a matter of breaking a code, of finding the key that automatically solves the problem. Certain cases of understanding may indeed resemble deciphering. But in general it is not a matter of finding and applying a fixed set of algorithmic rules. Quite on the contrary, the rules of understanding, if there are any, are not likely to be algorithmic but are presumably heuristic in nature, and the ability to shift from one set of such rules, i.e., from a strategy of understanding to another, is an outstanding characteristic of a good understander.

Some of the strategies in question have already been used in this essay. I have considered an analysis of meaning, explored formulation, briefly examined several theoretical frameworks, tried to relate the issue to other issues, thus expanding and complicating it enormously, and now I am trying to contract it again, by summarizing some of its main aspects. In what follows, I will proceed in a similar way, trying to be somewhat more systematic. I will try to discuss the strategies of understanding, progressively narrowing the discussion down to the understanding of language, by applying and at the same time reflecting upon these strategies. The term 'metalogue', coined by Bateson (1969) to describe a dialogue in which the communicative interaction taking place is itself the theme of the dialogue, might perhaps be extended to cover also self-reflective monologues as the one I am trying to develop here.

2.1 Our original problem, you will recall, was the relationship between understanding and meaning. I wish now to return to this original formulation of the problem in order to explore further the understanding of understanding. As I suggested before, a consideration of the meaning of an expression 'X' is a possible clue to start with when we try to understand 'X'. So, I might look up at a couple of dictionaries and reproduce here the readings they give for the word

'understanding'. But I don't even bother to do that, so sure I am that (a) you and I do know the meaning of the word, and that (b) this is not what we are looking for. It is perfectly clear to you and me that understanding X requires, in general, more than just knowing the meaning of 'X'. Since some authors seem to challenge this truism, by proposing to equate these two different things, I will spend some space in showing that it is indeed a truism.

Each one of us knows the meanings of many words without thereby being entitled to claim that he understands the things denoted by these words. You certainly have no trouble with the meanings of the expressions: 'A's industries', 'animals as pets', 'architecture', 'back pain', 'baking', 'book', 'change in education', 'chemistry', 'children', 'cooking', 'death and dying', 'equitation', 'Ernest Hemingway', 'everyday life', 'flying', 'foods', 'heart', 'history', 'homosexuality', 'Japan', 'jazz', 'Jewish theology', 'magazines', 'man', 'maps', 'marriage', 'money', 'movies', 'music', 'my Church', 'other persons', 'Picasso', 'poetry', 'reading', 'school boards', 'science', 'sex', 'social life', 'sound', 'suffering', 'surgery', 'teaching', 'television', 'Texas politics', 'the Bible', 'the Earth', 'the Film', 'the microscope', 'tomorrow', 'weather', 'young people in trouble', 'your bowels', 'your car', 'your cat', 'your emotions', 'yourself'.

That you know the meanings of these expression is evident from the fact that you won't normally interrupt people who use them in order to inquire "Excuse me, what do you mean by 'X'?" (where the X stands for anyone of the expressions above), as well as from your ability to use these words in your own speech. Nevertheless, I wonder whether anyone of you would claim to *understand X,* for more than a few of the things in the list. Leaving aside you and me, that this is not so (in general) is clearly demonstrated by the fact that each one of the expressions in our list *actually* appears in the title of a book in print having the general form 'understanding X'. It is hard to believe that someone would care to write and publish a book which promises to let the reader understand, say, cooking, if it were the case that anyone who knew the meaning of 'cooking' could *ipso facto* understand cooking.

To be sure, the form of words 'understanding X' may contain less familiar expressions, whose meanings are perhaps unknown to many of us, or expressions which belong to a special technical idiom, or else expressions whose precise meaning is itself a matter of dispute. Here are some real examples of such X's: 'an African Kingdom: Bunyoro', 'aphasia', 'arthritis', 'automation', 'bisexuals', 'body talk', 'capital markets', 'causality', 'chemical thermodynamics', 'CMOS integrated circuits', 'conflict and war ', 'culture', 'cystitis', 'democ-

racy', 'digital computers', 'doomsday', 'ecology', 'EEO: A supervisor's carebook', 'energy', 'epilepsy', 'female orgasm', 'figurative language', 'God', 'God's word', 'grammar', 'human nature', 'hydroponics', 'IC operational amplifiers', 'immunology', 'mass media', 'mental illness', 'mu', 'natural deduction', 'pietism', 'political science', 'put and options', 'Rawls', 'the cold war', 'the dollar crisis', 'the Kingdom of God'. But here again a mere account of the meaning of these expressions will not yield an understanding of X. I never encountered before the words 'cystitis' or 'mu'. I don't know their meanings. As for the former, I may guess it is the name of a disease, probably an inflammation. Indeed, the OED confirms this guess by characterizing cystitis as "an inflammation of the bladder". Is my learning of the meaning of the term enough to warrant a claim that I now understand the disease? At best, I have now some idea of where to look for in order to begin to understand it.
It is clear that, since understanding involves more than meaning, I cannot expect to find in the dictionary a full-fledged answer to my quest for understanding. Some other strategy must be applied. But first, we have to consider the arguments of those who seem to challenge the above truism.

2.2 A first line of attack would consist in enlarging somehow the concept of meaning, so as to transform it in a more likely candidate to be equated with understanding. A well-known enlargement of the notion is expressed by the slogan "meaning = use". The plausibility of such a view stems from the fact that in many cases a misuse of a term indicates lack of knowledge of the meaning of the term. For example, if someone would say: "Please, pass me the cystitis", he could be safely accused of not knowing either the meaning of 'cystitis' or of 'pass'. Since misuse is easily correlated with misunderstanding, the identification of meaning with use seems to lend some support to the identification of understanding with meaning.

Consider, however, the case of the technician in an electronic laboratory, who says to his companion: "Please, pass me the diode", when in fact he needs a transistor. He is certainly misusing the term 'diode'. This may be just a slip of the tongue, or a sign of professional incompetence, namely, the inability to distinguish between a diode and a transistor. If the latter is true, the technician may be charged with lack of understanding of diodes. But can he be said not to know the meaning of 'diode'? The proponents of the view in question would perhaps answer "yes". But then, I would say that they misuse the term 'meaning' since they subsume under it two cases in which the reasons for the

inappropriateness of an utterance seems to be quite different. If this reply were not sufficient, I could adapt for the purpose at hand Putnam's arguments to the effect that the extension of a term (which is one of the components of its meaning) does not necessarily change if our knowledge about the objects to which the term refer change (cf. Putnam 1975: 235ff.). 'Gold' now, and its Greek synonym two thousand years ago, have the same extension, although our means for identifying a piece of gold have changed significantly from the time of Archimedes. Our means of identifying something are part of our *understanding* of it. If Putman is right, then, understanding and meaning do not vary concomitantly. Hence, they cannot be equated.

Our result so far has been negative; it amounts to the conclusion that we cannot expect the dictionary to yield the understanding we seek. But, it should be stressed, the possibility that knowledge of meaning, though not a sufficient condition, be a necessary condition for understanding, has not been ruled out. So, an examination of meaning may still be a valuable strategy for understanding. In the preceding argumentation, we have also used the following strategies: recourse to common sense and intuition as a source for the truism put forward as a thesis; support of this thesis by consideration of a set of instances database (consisting in a list of books in print containing the term 'understanding'); anticipation of a (real or faked) challenge to the thesis, and its defense against it; appeal to a well-known theoretical framework as part of such a defense.

2.3 The critic may now question the adequacy of the set of instances that has served as database for our discussion of the relationship between meaning and understanding so far. That set — he might say — is both too narrow and too broad. It is too narrow because it contains only titles of books beginning with the word 'understanding'. Apart from the fact that the list indeed does not include relevant titles, which contain 'understanding' but not in the initial position (Bobrow and Collins 1975; von Wright 1971), or titles which contain synonyms and/or related expression (Carroll and Freedle 1972; Taylor 1970; Guttenplan 1975), one might wonder whether these books do in fact display understanding and, in case they do, whether they offer a representative sample of the varieties of understanding. As for the former question, we may grant that at least some of these books will indeed let their readers acquire some understanding of the topics they expound; at any rate, the books certainly display as much understanding of such topics as their authors have. But all the

mere examination of the titles can give us is an overview of the variety of possible *objects* of understanding. They do not offer us any insight concerning the *modes* of understanding and the actual *process* of understanding. They may be all suspected, in fact, to exemplify just one mode of understanding, namely a discursive, presumably theoretical mode. In order to disclose other modes as well as to gain insight into the process of understanding, we ought to examine carefully situations in which understanding is achieved. For example, what does really (cognitively) happen to a man who is writing or reading one of those books; or how is understanding achieved in a real conversation. Ethnomethodologists like Sacks and Schegloff rightly insist on the distortions that pure armchair theorizing may introduce into an account of communication, and demand instead a purely empirical approach.

On the other hand, the database is too broad because it encompasses objects of understanding as distinct as 'the Bible' (linguistic text), 'female orgasm' (a human experience), 'chemical thermodynamics' (a theory), 'cooking' (an everyday activity), and 'IC operational amplifiers' (a set of artifacts). For such a variety of objects, is it *prima facie* plausible to expect that any unitary account of understanding will prove satisfactory? In particular, since some of these objects (e.g., IC operational amplifiers) seem to have no significant connection with the notion of meaning, while others (e.g., 'God's word') are primarily meaning-bearing entities, it may seem unfair to try to discredit the thesis that meaning equals understanding by showing that it does not apply to all of the objects in the list. For, it may be intended, in the first place, as a thesis referring only to the understanding of language. The database should thus be narrowed down to this particular kind of understanding.

I tend to accept most of the criticism just presented, with some qualifications. The narrowness of the database is due to the fact that we were looking in it only for *clues* to understanding. We did not pretend that these data were exhaustive, nor representative of the whole field of understanding. Such requirements would have to be met if the ro1e assigned to the data in question was that of functioning as *evidence* for testing a theory of understanding. These two roles of a database should be carefully distinguished as urged by many philosophers of science: the former belongs to the 'context of discovery', the latter, to the 'context of justification'. It stands to reason that, in each of these contexts, different aspects of understanding are stressed, and different strategies are required. The choice of a database must fit these varying demands. As for the need of empirical investigation of *actual* cases of

understanding, I certainly agree. But we should not forget that, since understanding is a covert rather than overt process or state, empirical studies of understanding pose very serious methodological issues. The recognition of understanding involves interpretation (i.e., understanding) by the observer of certain gestures, speech-acts, etc. If one uses the subject's own verbal reports, he is himself interpreting part of his mental life, and his report has in turn to be interpreted by the observer. If one decides to rely only on observable variables (response time (RT) being the preferred one), the amount of interpretation that goes into the analysis of the results of 'comprehension tests' is still greater. Let us not lure ourselves into the belief that just by leaving the armchair and crossing the door of the laboratory, we will be *ipso facto* better off in our attempt to understand understanding: the conceptual issues will not be disentangled by sheer manipulation of sophisticated gadgets. But the laboratory situation or the attempt to write a computer program may contribute to their disentanglement by forcing the researcher to face precisely the crucial *practical* question of how to recognize understanding in particular cases.

2.4 In the course of the preceding discussion, the need for a typology of understanding became evident. If we have a taxonomy, we can know how representative a given sample is. We can also ask whether understanding of language constitutes indeed a separate category, and if so, what does it have in common with the other categories, and what distinguishes it from them.

M. Scriven (1972: 32) has proposed a five-members typology, stressing that these are "special cases of one concept" and not "different senses or concepts" of understanding. His types are: "1. Understanding an event, phenomenon or process, such as transistor deterioration or an error in reasoning; 2. Understanding a theory, such as information theory; 3. Understanding a natural language, such as English; 4. Understanding an experience, such as the experience of childbirth; 5. Understanding an entity or a class of entities, such as divorces, children, sheep, or Chrysler hemi-V-8's". Scriven himself is aware of some of the shortcomings of his classification. He admits, for example, that the first class is heterogeneous: whereas understanding a phenomenon usually means having a reasonable theory of a certain *set* of events (the word 'phenomenon' stands for a set of events, not for a particular event), understanding particular events is also connected with disposing of a theory, but it requires the ability to *apply* such a theory to the particular event, in order to determine, say, what is its cause, what kind of event it is, etc. But the classification has also

shortcomings his author is not aware of: it is unstructured, incomplete, and ambiguous.

It is unstructured because the relationships between the various categories are not made explicit. We have just seen that understanding a phenomenon (category 1) presupposes understanding a theory (category 2). Furthermore, experiences (category 4) are, in some sense, events (category 1) while languages (category 3) and theories (category 2) are "entities" (category 5), if this term is used as broadly as Scriven's examples suggest. None of these relationships is mentioned by Scriven. Moreover, the classification is incomplete because it does not reserve a special place for a class of things whose understanding seems to be peculiar in many respects, namely, the class of actions. An important philosophical tradition argues that, in understanding actions it is indispensable to take into account the intentions of the agents, and this fact implies an important gap between the understanding of actions and the understanding of, say, mere happenings or physical processes (cf. von Wright 1971). A classificatory scheme that does not take this gap into account either relies on some implicit theory that eliminates the gap, or else is obviously incomplete.

But Scriven's classification is also ambiguous, especially with respect to that category upon which we wish to concentrate our discussion: understanding a natural language. Consider again our list of books in print. It contains many titles in which the object of understanding is 'linguistic'. Since Scriven provides only one category of linguistic objects of understanding, presumably all of them should be placed under this single rubric. But I discern at least four different types of language understanding in the list:

a) Understanding of certain specific texts or sets of texts: the Talmud, the Lord's Prayer, the Bible and parts thereof (15 titles), Shakespeare, Jewish prayer, Hamlet, God's Word. In this case, the understanding offered may consist, among other things, in an interpretation of the texts or in a method to interpret them.
b) Understanding a certain style, register, genre, or type of language: fiction, figurative language, literature, magazines, medical terminology, oral communication, play scripts, poetry, scientific literature, technical English, the Essay, the Short Story.
c) Acquiring a working ability to understand and/or produce (usually written) utterances of a language: 'U and expressing conviction through paragraph and essay', 'U and using English', 'U the main idea: advanced

level', 'U language: a primer for language Arts teachers'. Probably some of the titles listed under b have also the character of practical handbooks typical of this item (e.g., 'U figurative language: what effect did the author intend?').

d) Understanding in the sense of a theoretical account of a particular language or of language in general or parts thereof: 'U language: a study of theories of language in linguistics and philosophy', 'U language: an introduction to linguistics', 'U natural language', 'U discourse: the speech-act and rhetorical action', 'U reading: a psycholinguistic analysis of reading and learning to read', 'U the structure of English'.[9]

Clearly, *d* should belong to Scriven's second category (understanding a theory), and probably this is the case for some of the members of *b* as well. As for *a* and *c* they deserve indeed special treatment, but there is no reason to view them as members of a single homogeneous category (even less so than events and phenomena). Probably what Scriven had in mind when he reserved a special category for language is the understanding not of 'language' as such, but either of '(linguistic) expressions' or of 'utterances'. This is indeed a class of objects of understanding that seems to display peculiar characteristics, and whose connection with 'knowing the meaning' appears to be quite intimate. But it is not identical to classes *a*, *b*, *c* or *d*, being perhaps close to *a* and *c*, so that Scriven's third category would have to be at least subdivided in order to accommodate all of this.

The proposed taxonomy could be improved in order to meet the foregoing criticism. We might thus end up with a relatively satisfactory typology, and this would certainly be a first step in coping with the task of understanding understanding. But it would not take us very far, for a classification *per se* does not give an answer to the question "in what does this or that particular type of understanding consist?". And, as long as that question remains unanswered, the question whether these types are in fact types of the same 'thing', as well as the question of the nature of this common 'thing', cannot be seriously handled. To be sure, there are cases in which the quest for understanding may be satisfied by a mere classification. For instance, if my current concern is to assign the title 'Understanding Cystitis' to one of Scriven's five classes, it will be enough for me to learn that cystitis is a kind of disease. The power and widespread use of mere classification as a strategy for understanding should not be underestimated in view of the trivial nature of the above example. One of the books I have found boasting the title 'Understanding

Understanding' (Osmund, Osmundsen and Agel 1974), for example, deals with the problem of understanding other people, in the sense of being able to "center others' worlds". The authors believe to have found a "key to others' worlds", which consists simply in the correct identification of the psychological type to which a person belongs, in terms of their extended taxonomy of "types of man".[10]

Although classification may offer some understanding, and may be sufficient in *some* cases, its dangers should not be forgotten. Adherence to a fixed classificatory scheme may induce, literally, a total blindness for any aspects of a situation that do not fit the scheme.[11] Classification may thus become an obstacle rather than an aid to understanding. At best, it is but one of the strategies of understanding which, as the other ones, must be abandoned as soon as it becomes obtrusive.

In this section we have considered and used, besides classification, the strategy of challenge and defense of a thesis. The challenge has been addressed to the database used to support the thesis. The defense employed a classical move of the "art of disputation", namely, partial acceptance of the criticism put forward by the challenger. This move is usually verbalized in the form of a "Yes, but . . ." clause. The qualification following the 'but' introduces a *distinction* whose aim is to break the apparent unity of the challenger's claim. Once such a unity is broken, the defender is no longer bound either to accept or to reject a whole "package"; he can now be selective in his acceptance, though perhaps not entirely free in his choice (see Chapter 6). Although traditionally considered a rhetorical technique, appropriate for disputation, it seems to me that the move just described is also an important strategy of understanding. One of the distinctions made consisted in pointing out the different strategic roles a database may have, depending on whether it is used in a context of discovery or in a context of justification.

3. We have been trying to narrow down the scope of our discussion, in order to single out language understanding as a special type of understanding, without much success. One of the reasons for that failure may have been the excessively general formulations we used (e.g., 'understanding language'). Had we used a more specific form of words, like 'understanding a (linguistic) expression', and examined its relationship to 'knowing the meaning of that expression', the results of our investigation might have been completely different. For, although in general, as we have seen, understanding X does not

follow from knowing the meaning of 'X', whenever the object of understanding is a linguistic expression, it does seem to be the case that knowing the meaning of the expression entails understanding it. Presumably, one reason for this is that both in 'understanding the expression 'E'' and in 'knowing the meaning of 'E'', the expression 'E' is surrounded by quotation marks, whereas X, the object of understanding, does not appear within quotation marks in the general expression 'understanding X'.[12] Let us then concentrate on this more likely candidate for an equation of meaning with understanding, in order to be able to assess such a thesis at its best.

M. Dummett, for one, has forcefully defended such a thesis. According to him, "a theory of meaning is a theory of understanding; that is, what a theory of meaning has to give an account of is what it is that someone knows when he knows the language, that is, when he knows the meanings of the expressions of the language" (Dummett 1975: 99). Furthermore, such an equation of theory of meaning and theory of understanding seems to function, in his eyes, not just as one of the theses of his philosophy of language, but rather as a *criterion of adequacy* for any satisfactory (philosophical) account of language: "Any theory of meaning which was not, or did not immediately yield, a theory of understanding, would not satisfy the purpose for which, philosophically, we require a theory of meaning" (1975: 100-101). Although sometimes Dummett uses a general formulation of the kind we decided to abandon for the moment (e.g., 'to know the language'), he not only makes clear that this is shorthand for a set of specific statements of the kind we accepted as plausible candidates to support the equation thesis (e.g., 'to know the meanings of the expressions of the language'). He also sees in the inability of certain theories to "explain a speaker's understanding of any *individual* word or sentence" (1975: 115; my stress, M.D.), as opposed to their ability to explain how the language works *as a whole*, one of their most serious shortcomings. His opposition to this kind of holism can thus be taken as a guarantee to the effect that, what he is proposing to equate is indeed 'understanding an expression 'E'', with 'knowing the meaning of 'E''.

Dummett's interest is not focused, like ours, on the question 'What is a theory of understanding?', but rather on the question 'What is a theory of meaning?'. Consequently, his thesis is not that 'a theory of understanding is a theory of meaning', but its converse. Formally speaking, since the 'is' stands for the equality sign, these are merely two equivalent forms of the same thesis. Yet, the different formulations imply a difference in emphasis as well as in

what is presupposed. Whereas in the former it is assumed that "understanding" is the problematic concept to be clarified, in the latter the same concept is assumed to be clear enough in order to serve as a means to clarify the concept of meaning. In particular, by equating them, Dummett capitalizes on our general intuition (elaborated upon above) that understanding involves *more* than knowing the meaning, for he in fact wants to show that, in order to satisfy the equation thesis, knowing the meaning of an expression must be conceived as *more*, say, than *merely* being able to translate it, or than *merely* knowing its truth conditions. Theories, like Quine's or Davidson's, which yield *only* such results are considered by him 'modest' theories of meaning. Rather than being themselves theories of understanding, they *rely on* the speaker's understanding of some other language, the one into which the expressions are translated or in which the truth conditions are specified. Even if we assume that somehow such theories manage to specify what are the *concepts* to which each expression of the language is associated, they would be able to do so only on the assumption that one already has the concepts required. But a 'full-blooded' theory of meaning of a language, one that can be truly equated with a theory of understanding, must do more than that. It must also "embody an explanation of all the concepts expressible in that language, at least by unitary expressions"; it must, "in explaining what one must know in order to know the meaning of each expression in the language, simultaneously explain what it is to have the concepts expressible by means of that language" (Dummett 1975: 101).

It is useful to remark that Dummett's 'full-blooded' theory of meaning would be an excellent example of a 'level-I' theory, in Harman's (1971) three-termed classification of semantic theories. Harman gives some further indications about the tasks that a level-I theory must fulfill: it should attempt to explain what it is to think that p, to believe that p, to desire that p, etc.; it should make clear what it is for a thought to be a thought that so-and-so, which in turn involves explaining the connection of that thought with evidence and inference, with action, decision, and intention; in short, it should be able to determine the role of an expression (expressing a thought) in one's 'conceptual-scheme' and its influence in the evidence-inference-action game (Harman 1971: *passim*). Clearly, the explanation of 'what it is to have a concept', which Dummett requires to be performed by a theory of meaning, is only a part of what a full-fledged level-I theory, in Harman's sense, should do. But it is hard to believe that 'having a concept' can be isolated from the other

components of a level-I theory just mentioned. For, in order to understand what it is to have a concept, one must certainly account for the fact that the concept in question bears certain relations to other concepts, by virtue of which it can play a role in certain inferences, for the fact that it can be the object of certain prepositional attitudes, etc. So, a theory of meaning which purports to be a theory of understanding in the sense of knowing what it is to have a concept must in fact be a complete level-I theory, i.e., a full-fledged (philosophical) theory of cognition.[13]

Once one realizes the full extent of what is required from a theory of meaning by identifying it to a theory of understanding, one may wonder whether this is not too much.[14] And this is only part of the story. Consider the understanding of a sentence or of another linguistic expression used, say, in a conversation. A theory of such understanding must take into account, at least, the following elements: background knowledge of speaker and hearer, assumptions about the current state of their perceptual and attention fields, conversational maxims, relationships with preceding and following utterances (or text), non-verbal channels of communication, social system of roles to which the participants belong, cultural setting, etc.

Consider, for example, a mother who says, in the course of an interview with a doctor who is treating her daughter's *anorexia nervosa*: "She doesn't eat more than a bird". From the contextual information just supplied, we know that the 'she' refers to the daughter, and we may conjecture that the mother is *describing* one of the symptoms of the disease, namely, the daughter's lack of appetite. This interpretation relies, furthermore, on our knowledge about the eating habits of birds. Suppose, however, the people in question belong to a culture where there is a ritual demanding that young girls eat at least two birds a day until they get married. In this case, the sentence will no longer be understood as a comparison between the eating habits of the girl and birds. But beyond that, it will presumably be understood not as a description of the disease, but as an indication of its cause (divine punishment due to violation of the ritual demand), as well as a suggestion as to how it should be 'treated', namely, by forcing the girl to eat the required two birds.[16]

Labov and Fanshel (1977) try to show that, in order to "get at the 'real meaning' of conversation", one must inevitably go beyond the mere plane of 'what is said', and deal with what is in fact 'being done' by the participants in the course of the conversation (123). In order to reach that level of understanding, speakers have to know such things as the social roles of inter-

locutors, in terms of their needs, abilities, obligations and rights (94), whether they have or not this or that particular piece of information (89), whether a certain action is needed or not, whether the interlocutor is willing to perform it (87), etc. But even before such a deeper level of interpretation is reached, the very determination of 'what is said' requires a process Labov and Fanshel label 'expansion', in which elements that have previously been isolated and identified (analysis) are now combined (synthesis) in order to yield an explicit paraphrase representing 'what is said' in a given utterance (49-50). Furthermore, the authors admit that there are no precise rules nor limits for the production of such an expansion, i.e., that it is open-ended and, to a great extent, the result of the exercise of the interpreter's intuitive judgment of relevance: "There is no limit to the number of explanatory facts we could bring from other parts of the interview and the end result of such a procedure might be combining everything that was said in the session into one sentence" (50-51).

These examples make clear the real extent of the task that is being assigned to a theory of meaning, if it is equated with a theory of understanding. Whether in fact the process of understanding just described is open-ended or not is an open question. But, no matter what the answer is, there is no doubt that all the general strategies of understanding discussed above are also operative in the actual understanding of an utterance, since they help the hearer to 'assimilate it to his conceptual framework'.[17] They must therefore be taken into account by a theory of meaning/understanding, whose main concern is the clarification of the nature of such a conceptual framework.

The recognition of the role played by this wealth of contextual factors in understanding may lead to a number of reactions. Some may find it possible to modify, say, a truth-conditional semantics by adding to it an account of at least some of these factors, in order to preserve its ability to count as a theory of understanding. This is, substantially, the line taken by Holdcroft (1981). But the set of 'communicative beliefs' he proposes to add to the theory covers only a small fraction of the 'conceptual framework' actually required for understanding. A more radical move, inspired by the desire to take into account all these other factors as well, would consist in dissolving altogether the notion of a relatively fixed 'meaning' attached to a linguistic expression (its 'literal meaning'), on the grounds that the more contextual factors you add to the picture, the less there is reason to suppose that anything remains fixed in the interpretation of the expression. In Weimer's (1974: 424) words, "all sen-

tences, regardless of whether the linguist marks them as such, are *inherently* ambiguous". I leave the discussion of such a move for another paper. Whether moderate or radical, the move just considered is taken only by those who wish to preserve the equation of theory of understanding and theory of meaning.

Others might choose to abandon such an equation, in view of the difficulties it poses for semantics. This is the position adopted by Putnam (1979), at least with respect to a part of semantics, namely the theory of reference. According to him, the fact that there is a stable correspondence between words and things (and between sentences and states of affairs) may be viewed as one of the reasons that explain our *success* in understanding language, but this does not imply that the speakers themselves should be credited with the *knowledge* of that correspondence. Since, on Dummett's view, a theory of understanding is a theory of what the speakers know and are able to *recognize,* an account of that correspondence (i.e., theory of reference relying on the notion of truth) should no longer be considered a part of (or identical with) a theory of understanding, if Putnam's proposal is tenable.

I don't want to discuss here the tenability of Putnam's suggestion, but rather (part of) Dummett's rejoinder to it, which seems to me to be quite illuminating. Summarizing his reply to Putnam, Dummett (1979: 225) says: "I may put the point as follows. For a semantic theory even to play the explanatory role that Hilary desires, it must be a *possible* theory of understanding, even if not one that shows what in fact constitutes the speaker's mastery of their language". Since a truth-conditional semantics cannot satisfy this requirement, according to Dummett, it cannot be a satisfactory theory of meaning. Without entering into the reasons Dummett gives for denying truth-conditional semantics' ability to meet the requirement, reasons which have to do with the principle of bivalence, I will take the liberty to speculate about the notion of a *possible* theory of understanding, and about some of its possible consequences.

One of the arguments Dummett presents against truth-conditional semantics is roughly as follows: a truth-conditional theory accounts for meaning in terms of what it is for a sentence to *be* true, without mentioning our ability to recognize whether a sentence is true or not; but then it leaves unexplained how our grasp of the meaning of a sentence leads us to treat this or that as evidence for its truth (Dummett 1979: 218); since the latter is at least part of what a theory of understanding is supposed to explain, a truth-conditional semantics does not yield a theory of understanding; hence, it is not a

satisfactory theory of meaning. A possible rejoinder could consist in claiming that all this argument shows is that truth-conditional semantics is *incomplete* as a theory of understanding. When supplemented by the required theory of belief and of other propositional attitudes, as well as by a theory of communication (e.g., along the lines proposed by Holdcroft) and of other contextual and cognitive factors (in particular, by a theory of verification or justification of statements), it would result in a full-fledged theory of understanding. In fact, so the rejoinder would go, there is no principled difficulty in providing such additions and combining them with truth-conditional semantics so as to yield a theory of understanding.

To this, Dummett would eventually reply that it is not just a matter of complementation. For him, there is a fundamental heterogeneity, perhaps even an incompatibility, between truth-conditional semantics and a theory of understanding, such that no complementation short of an entirely new semantics could transform the one into the other. For, if such a transformation by mere complementation were possible, then the semantics should be such that, in the absence of the factors that require such a complementation (such as the interference of other cognitive abilities, context-dependence, lack of evidence, etc.), the knowledge of meaning (as specified by the theory) would *by itself* amount to full understanding. But truth-conditional semantics is not of that sort. Since it does not take into account, in the first place, the required epistemic notions, even in ideal conditions it would have to be supplemented by what would in fact turn out to be a complete theory of understanding. But this means not only that it is an incomplete theory of understanding, capable of being suitably complemented; it means that it is a 'theory of meaning' that does not make any contribution whatsoever to a theory of understanding. If so, how can it purport to be a theory of meaning at all?

Thus, to require that a theory of meaning be a *possible* theory of understanding is, I submit, to withdraw from the equation thesis (or, what amounts to the same, to restrict its validity to the ideal case), replacing it by the requirement that a satisfactory theory of meaning should be either a proper part of a theory of understanding or a separate theory which is able to contribute directly to it, in a significant way. This, in turn, would imply that the theory of meaning must be *homogeneous* with other theories relevant to an account of understanding. That is to say, it must be so formulated as to allow for easy combination with those theories.

I don't know whether Dummett would endorse my suggestions so far, but I have reasons to believe that at this point we would part company. For I would claim that the other theories relevant to a theory of understanding include not only a *philosophical* account of propositional attitudes, inference, evidence and similar epistemic and epistemological notions, but also a fairly complete *psychological* theory of man's cognitive abilities. Dummett, on the other hand, would presumably settle for the former, and perhaps even condemn the latter as a dangerous return to psychologism. The best I can offer by way of an argument in support of my position is to point again to the many strategies required in order to achieve understanding, most of them involving one or another cognitive structure. If a theory of meaning is to be a possible theory of understanding, in the sense of a theory that is able to contribute to a global account of understanding, then meaning itself should be construed either as one of these structures or else as very intimately related to them. Otherwise, it is hard to see how the desired homogeneity among the various components of a theory of understanding could be achieved. One needs not go as far as transforming meaning and knowledge into purely psychological notions, as proposed by Franks, among others.[18] Meanings can eventually retain some sort of special epistemological status, while at the same time playing a role in understanding. They might be viewed, for example, as strategic clues, which trigger and control the process of looking for relevant contextual information in order to achieve understanding of an utterance.[19] But this is not the place for further speculations on the precise nature of an understanding-oriented theory of meaning. It is sufficient to stress that, through a plausible reading of the notion of a possible theory of understanding, we were able to shift from the equation thesis to the partial inclusion (or close connection) thesis about the relationship between theory of meaning and theory of understanding. By thus eliminating the reductionistic and anti-intuitive flavor of the former thesis, such a move paved the way for a more fruitful and, I believe, closer to truth conception of the relationship between meaning and understanding.

As in the previous sections, I should now survey the strategies employed in this section. Most of them will be familiar to the reader by now. I will only call attention to the strategy of *re-interpretation* used both for the equation thesis as a whole and for the notion of a possible theory of understanding in particular. Taking a concept, statement or argument out of the theoretical framework to which they belong, and exploring their use in another environment, for purposes different from those for which they were originally cre-

ated, is one of the most powerful means for achieving understanding and insight. But it is also one of the most dangerous ways of inducing error and creating confusion, of course.

4. Having stressed so much the variety, complexity and uncertainty of the strategies involved in understanding, I hope I have not convinced you that understanding never occurs in communication (and elsewhere). For the fact is that it occurs and, surprisingly, to a much greater extent than misunderstanding. I believe the reason for that lies in the fact that the strategies we considered are indeed much more orderly than one might think. To be sure, if there are rules that constitute such strategies and coordinate their use, they are certainly not algorithmic, but rather heuristic in nature. That is to say, their use is neither obligatory nor a guarantee of success. Their respective contributions may in fact be overcome and even totally rejected, once a higher stage in the process of understanding is reached. Nonetheless, they are necessary and fairly reliable, if any understanding at all is to be achieved. I will briefly illustrate this with an example.

A says to B: (1) You know, . . . our friend is going to be elected president. From this clue alone (i.e., the utterance), B may infer that some X, who is a friend both of A and B is going to be elected president of some institution I. He can also infer that elections are due shortly in I, etc. He may then search for I's and X's that fit such conditions, coming up, say, with Goldenberg, a common friend, who is a high official in the Semantex Corporation, where an election is to be held next week. B's hypothesis at this stage is that (1) is to be understood as saying that Goldenberg will be elected president of Semantex Corporation next week. Yet, a further clue, e.g., a gesture pointing to the North, where Schwartz lives, indicates that X is not Goldenberg but Schwartz. The hypothesis must be now thoroughly revised by B, in order to have a *coherent* interpretation of (1). For Schwartz does not have any connection with Semantex; furthermore, he is no common friend, but rather a common foe of both A and B; he is a foe of them on the grounds that he has disturbed their careers and personal projects in the Ministry of Health, where A, B and Schwartz work. In the Ministry of Health there is no president, and elections are not normally held. But there is a vacant position of director general, to which an appointment is due shortly, and it is known that the minister (who makes such appointments) is in very good terms with Schwartz. In the light of all these clues, not only the referential assignment (for X and I) has to be changed, i.e.,

not only a revision of what the utterance was understood to be about must be made, but also the predicative expressions will have to be understood differently, say 'ironically': 'friend' is to be understood as 'foe', 'election' as 'appointment', and 'president' as 'director general'. Practically nothing has remained from B's original interpretative hypothesis, based on the 'standard' meanings of the words in the utterance and on the most obvious contextual information available. Yet, without such standard meanings as a starting point, triggering the process of understanding, and guiding it when further clues indicate the need to revise earlier hypotheses, hardly any understanding of the utterance could be attained at all. Though sometimes minimal, the role of meaning in the process of understanding is, thus, crucial. As a Brazilian proverb puts it: "A bom entendedor meia palavra basta" (for a good understander, half a word is enough).

Notes

1. I am now trying an 'expectation- or hypothesis-driven' (or 'top-down') strategy, after having explored the possibilities of a 'data-driven' or 'bottom-up' one. For these terms, see Bobrow and Brown (1975: 108-109).

2. Cf. Dascal (1978: 106-115) for a study of the correlation of this dichotomy with other more or less equivalent ones, which shows its fundamental role in a theory of relations and in the philosophy of language.

3. See Grice (1957). Locke had already formulated a similar demand, albeit in a less sophisticated form (*Essay,* III, 2, 2).

4. Descartes, R. *Discours de la Méthode*, 2ème partie. Leibniz's critique is to be found in C. J. Gerhardt, (ed.), *Leibniz: Die Philosopblscben Schriften*, vol. IV, 329-330.

5. Leibniz, for one, devoted much thought to this issue. Cf. Couturat (1901: 177ff.) and Dascal (1971a) for some discussion.

6. The distinction between 'data synthesis' and 'goal synthesis' (Bobrow and Brown 1975: 114) is related but not identical to the distinction mentioned in note 1 above. Much of the literature of the early seventies and late sixties on the nature of the 'memory trace' faces this dilemma.

7. Ziff (1972) has suggested that degrees of understanding might be proportional to the number of inferences one is able to make. A similar suggestion has been made by me in connection with the 'opaqueness' of belief contexts (Dascal 1975a: 208).

8. A similar problem is faced by the attempts to produce acceptable formulations of the so-called verifiability criterion of meaning (cf. Dascal 1971b).

9. I do not claim that my assignment of these titles to each of the categories is correct. It is only a guess, based on the titles alone. Some titles, by the way, do not allow any guess: e.g., 'Understanding English', 'Understanding Tongues-Speaking'.

10. The authors are so confident that people's reactions are in fact guided by a classificatory scheme of the type they propose, that they venture even political predictions based on the scheme. For instance: "If he (Edward Kennedy) is around long enough politically, it will be surprising if he is not elected president. And the reasons for his election will be quite different from those he may enunciate in the campaign" (45).

11. Cp. the notions of 'habitual set' and 'functional fixedness' in problem-solving (Hilgard and Atkinson 1967: 378-379).

12. One might claim that the correct (or deep) form of 'Understanding X' should be in fact 'Understanding 'X''. If so, our previous efforts would have been totally pointless, the whole issue being a matter of confusing use and (implicit) mention of a term. But this claim would mean that all objects of understanding are, implicitly at least, linguistic — a thesis which, although lending support to the equation of meaning and understanding, would itself require powerful independent support, given its extreme counter-intuitiveness.

13. In so far as Harman believes that language itself is a *vehicle* of thought, i.e., in so far as thought is conceived by him as being performed in language, the name 'theory of meaning' for such a full-fledged theory of thought is certainly not a misnomer. But for someone who postulates a strict separation between thought and language, as Dummett seems to do, it is hard to see why should a theory of thought be called a 'theory of meaning'.

14. Besides requiring the theory of meaning to be 'full-blooded', Dummett also requires it to be 'rich' rather than 'austere', in McDowell's terms (Dummett 1975: 122). The only upper limit he seems to impose on a theory of meaning is that suggested by the postulate that meaning should not transcend use. But is this really a limit?

15. This factor is generally overlooked, but it is extremely important in accounting for some facts of conversation, like certain implicatures (Chapter 2), digressions (Chapter 10), etc. I have used the term 'topical relevance' to refer to what is currently in the focus of one's field of attention.

16. Probably, the second interpretation would be favored if we had 'one' instead of 'a' and contrastive stress on 'one'. But the Spanish sentence, which inspired my example, "Ella no comía más que un pajarito" (from Unamano's "El Espejo de la Muerte") does not seem to require such modifications in order to bear, out of context, both interpretations.

17. This is Weimer's phrase. He also says: "Until the hearer assimilates a sentence to his conceptual framework, it has no determinate meaning at all, and is 'ambiguous' in the sense of 'uncomprehended' (Weimer 1974: 424). The identification of comprehension with disambiguation seems to me problematic. But here Weimer is establishing an identity between 'having a determinate meaning' and 'being comprehended' which is analogous to Dummett's equation of 'understanding' and 'knowing the meaning'. In both cases, furthermore, the 'conceptual framework' plays a crucial role.

18. "Knowledge, meaning, and understanding will be understood as follows: 'Knowledge' refers essentially to static, semi-permanent long-term memory relationships. 'Meaning' refers to relations activated or generated as a function of knowledge relations and the particular present environmental context. 'Understanding' is a function of the extent to which adequate (coherent, complete) meanings have been generated in a particular context" (Franks 1974: 232n).

19. Bransford and McCarrell (1974: 201) recognize the need for relatively fixed, 'field-independent' characteristics of linguistic expressions, which they call "cues or instructions for creating meaning". Yet, as this phrase suggests, they view these characteristics as *different* from meaning itself, whereas I am proposing to attribute to the meanings this character of 'cues or instructions'.

Chapter 4

Two modes of understanding

We shall be concerned, in this chapter, with communicative acts involving at least two persons, whereby a relationship is established between them, based on the use of language in a given context. Such a relationship is often considered to require or contain some measure of 'understanding' between the persons engaged in it, but it also allows for a considerable amount of 'misunderstanding'. Our purpose is to clarify these two notions. In so doing, we will identify and describe two distinct modes of understanding, which we call 'comprehending' and 'grasping'. Our analysis here refers basically to the linguistic interaction between adult speakers belonging to the same linguistic community, in everyday situations. We will occasionally apply our conceptual distinction to other kinds of interaction (e.g., mother/child, husband/wife, patient/analyst, public speaker/audience, etc.), in order to show its ability to provide a means for categorizing different types of dialogues in terms of their differential requirements regarding the two modes of understanding. We shall also suggest a genetic/developmental conjecture to account for the origin and establishment of the two basic modes of understanding.

1

The person who performs a communicative act expects thereby to be 'understood'. She expects that, through her communicative act, the other will 'get in touch' with her mental state, i.e., with her current representations, feelings, etc. Her act generates for the addressee a duty, namely the 'duty to understand'. What is the nature and scope of this duty, and how does the addressee discharge it? If the communicative act were absolutely 'transparent', the addressee could easily fulfill her duty of understanding: all she had to do would be to 'see through' the act, detecting the communicative intention(s) of the agent, and 'assimilating' them accordingly (i.e., 'modifying her mind' in accordance with such intentions). Similarly, if the act were not a 'commu-

nicative' act, whose peculiar characteristic is that of being causally efficient by virtue of a complex interplay of intentions and recognition of intentions (cf. Grice 1967), but rather a 'directly' causal act, there would be no need for the 'addressee' (which in this case would be merely the object of action) to 'understand', since she would be merely 'acted upon'. However, neither sheer causality nor 'full' transparency are characteristic of communicative acts. The former, for the reasons just stated, and the latter, because some measure of 'opaqueness' is inherent to every communicative act.[1]

In 'normal' adult communication, non-transparency is thus the standard assumption, and there is no way to escape the need for a 'pragmatic interpretation' of a communicative act (see below). It follows, then, that the duty imposed upon the addressee resembles the solution of a problem with an unknown, whose value he is supposed to determine. The determination of such a value is the process of 'interpretation' of the communicative act, which is supposed to yield the required understanding.

Normally, speech is used to convey one pragmatic interpretation, and success in communication is measured by the addressee's ability to reach that interpretation. This is what is usually subsumed by the term 'understanding'. Notice that understanding is always pragmatic understanding. It is not a matter only of understanding the speaker's words (determining the 'sentence meaning') nor of understanding these words in their specific reference to the context of utterance (determining the 'utterance meaning'), but always a matter of getting to the speaker's intention in uttering those words in that context (determining the 'speaker's meaning'). How this is achieved is the main question of 'sociopragmatics'.[2]

For our purposes, it suffices to say that there are basically two different ways of conveying a speaker's meaning: *directly* and *indirectly*. A speaker's meaning is directly conveyed when it is identical to the utterance meaning 'computed' by the semantic-pragmatic 'rules' of the language. In this case, pragmatic interpretation is nothing but the 'endorsement' of the utterance meaning by the listener, i.e., its identification as being the speaker's meaning. A speaker's meaning is indirectly conveyed when it differs from the utterance meaning. Pragmatic interpretation, in this case, consists in finding out, by clues in the context, and by relying upon the utterance meaning as a starting point, what is the speaker's meaning. This happens, for example, when language is used figuratively, or when the so-called 'conversational implicatures' are conveyed, or, in general, when what is conveyed remains implicit rather

than explicit. The listener's task, in these cases, is to work out by himself the implicit meaning (to draw inferences, to draw analogies, to 'compute' implicatures, etc.), and to check whether the meaning he has worked out actually fits as a construal of the speaker's meaning.

The 'duty of understanding' even the most prosaic communicative act is not fulfilled unless the addressee goes through all the above-mentioned steps of interpretation. It is not a matter of just understanding the words, but also of understanding the sense they acquire in that particular context of utterance, the 'point' of the speaker's use of those words in that context, and their possible implicit and indirect message. A woman stepping on A's foot, who does not understand that A's remark 'Madam, you're stepping on my foot' is not to be taken as a statement (to which she might reply 'Yes indeed, how interesting'), but as a request for her to move her foot, has not complied with her 'duty of understanding', though she has perfectly well understood the words addressed to her.

The problem the addressee faces, therefore, involves not one, but a bundle of unknowns: he has to identify properly several of the 'layers of significance' conveyed by the speaker's utterance.[3] Briefly stated, the relevant layers can be described in terms of four questions about the speaker's utterance that it is the addressee's duty to try to answer (Fillmore 1976: 78): (a) what did he say?, (b) what was he talking about?, (c) why did he bother to say it?, and (d) why did he say it in the way he did? The first one has been dealt with by traditional semantics, both linguistic and philosophical. The second one lies within the scope of current extended versions of semantics, such as Fillmore's 'frame' or 'scene-semantics'. The third one leads into what some believe to be the main concerns of pragmatics, namely speech-act theory and the logic of conversation. And the last one has to do with rhetoric, a field that is also considered today as belonging, at least partially, to pragmatics. In answering each of these questions, the addressee makes use of both linguistic and contextual information, and relies upon the existence of various systems of rules — phonological, syntactic, semantic, pragmatic, as well as broad social constraints governing interaction in general. Some of these rules are algorithmic, while others are merely heuristic, but communication only can proceed under the shared assumption, by speaker and addressee, that at least a substantial portion of the rules is both shared and followed by both of them.

2

Our account so far displays two features that we must now reconsider: (1) it presents the 'duty of understanding' as being essentially the same for all kinds of communicative acts, interlocutors, and contexts; and (2) it assumes that the fulfillment of such a duty, though requiring the identification of quite different layers of significance through the use of different means, is achieved via the same means, namely the ability to follow certain 'rules' or conventions. These assumptions must now be modified, in order to provide a more satisfactory account of 'understanding'. For, observations of both daily communication and less usual cases indicate that what is perceived by the participants as their 'duty of understanding' may vary significantly not only for different interlocutors and different contexts, but also in the course of the same communicative exchange; and, furthermore, these observations show that it is necessary to posit the existence of a mode of understanding that differs in nature and function from those so far discussed.

Of course, according to the nature of the communicative act, 'understanding' may lead to more than just modifying one's state of mind (by virtue of the 'absorption' of the information transmitted); it may lead also to taking some action (e.g., if the act is a *directive* such as a request or an order), or else deliberately abstaining from action (which is also a form of action). Such further consequences of understanding are usually referred to in the philosophical literature as the 'perlocutionary' effects of a communicative act. But this, in itself, does not require the postulation of a different 'mode' of understanding. For, if such perlocutionary effects are achieved by *virtue* of communicative acts, they depend on the regular understanding of such acts.

A first hint at a rather different kind of interactional demand, often connected with the notion of understanding, lies in the fact that one often expects that the 'other' will be able to 'understand' one's 'expressive' (rather than merely 'communicative') manifestations, such as one's moods, gestures or postures of comfort or discomfort. Thus, if one is sitting uncomfortably and shows signs of feeling cold, one may find out — sometimes to one's surprise — that the other person present in the room will do something about it (offering another chair, turning the heating on, etc.). When this happens, one eventually 'discovers' that in fact one was counting on that all along, without being aware thereof. And vice-versa: when it does *not* happen, i.e., when the other does not act as would be required by his perception of one's

current needs, this is felt as a kind of aggression. Presumably, such occurrences are based on the development of expectations grounded on prior experience. The fallible or probabilistic nature of such expectations is often overlooked, leading to the suggestion that some form of obligation for the other to 'understand' and comply with one's wishes or needs obtains also in such cases, and this constitutes the basis for several kinds of misunderstanding. Yet, such expectations cannot be seen, *in general,* as on a par with the more basic 'duty to understand' one's explicit communicative acts. They suggest a different mode of understanding, with a logic of its own. The following cases further illustrate the distinction at issue.

Consider the following example of a rather trivial communicative exchange. One of us (I.B.) engages in a conversation with his taxi driver. The driver, learning that I.B. is a relative of a dentist with whom he is familiar, inquires whether he is also a dentist. I.B. tells him that he is a doctor, and upon further insistence, that he is a psychiatrist. At this point, the driver unexpectedly reports that 'a good friend of his' uses hashish and claims that hashish improves his sexual performance, and would certainly have good effects for driving as well. He then asks I.B. what does he think, 'as a doctor', about this. At this point, I.B. is trying to figure out what will be the driver's next move: is he a pusher looking for new clients, or will he go on to ask the doctor — who presumably has access to drugs — to provide him with some, or else is he simply seeking professional advice on the issue at hand? Clearly, the conversation has evolved from a casual driver/passenger chat into a more substantial and potentially risky exchange. Such a shift imposed upon each of the participants a more demanding 'duty of understanding'. It became necessary to figure out, beyond the more or less explicit 'point' of the driver's utterances, his possible motivation as well. Among other things, the question 'Why did he choose me as an interlocutor for this particular subject matter?' — a question not included in Fillmore's list — became relevant, and conjectures about its correct answer (e.g., 'because I am a psychiatrist', or 'because I am a relative of someone he knows and hence someone he may trust', etc.) became necessary for pursuing the conversation appropriately. In a sense, the driver's move changed the 'rules' of the conversation, thereby shifting the level of understanding required.

We would like to say that the perception of such shifts involves a different mode of understanding, which we would like to call 'grasping' (Sp. 'captar'; see Berenstein 1982). Unlike the modes of understanding discussed

in section 1, for which we would now reserve the term 'comprehending', grasping is not a matter of following the rules, but rather of being able to determine what are the rules to be followed. While the need for grasping becomes apparent when a shift of level of understanding occurs (as in the above example), it is in fact always needed and presupposed: one is indeed always required, as a precondition for communication, to be able to determine as precisely as possible at what level of 'duty of understanding' one's interlocutor is operating, i.e., what set of rules one is supposed to apply. Failure to do so, i.e., failure to 'grasp', produces kinds of misunderstandings that differ significantly from misunderstandings arising from the incorrect application of the (correctly grasped) rules.

Let us now turn to an example involving some pathological ingredients. A hysterical girl, chatting with a young man, seems to him to indicate, through certain bodily postures and movements (e.g., she crosses her legs, turns her eyes down in a peculiar way, etc.), that she is conveying erotic signals.[4] The man, on the basis of his reading of such signals, goes on to a more intimate stage of the exchange, getting closer, touching her. The girl finds herself involved in an erotic exchange, and since she is not aware of the infantile pleasure she is deriving from it, she actually increases her seductive conduct, thus confirming the young man's assumption about his being at the proper level of understanding. When, finally, on the basis of this 'correct' mistake (since at the unconscious level they 'understand' each other, whereas at the conscious level, they don't), he explicitly invites her to go to bed, she is extremely surprised, and violently rejects his advances ('I am not that kind of girl!'), to the utter confusion of the young man.

In this case, we might say that what happened is that there was a lack of synchronization between the interlocutors in shifting from one level of understanding to another. The young man applied rules of interpretation to the girl's bodily signals that are well established socially, and may even be considered to be somewhat conventional. His was not, therefore, a 'misunderstanding' arising out of incorrect application of such 'semantic' rules. It was rather a case of what we might call 'misgrasping': he did not grasp that the time and circumstances were not yet ripe to apply such rules. Both he and the girl *knew* — irrespectively of whether they were aware or not of such knowledge — what those signals 'meant'. What they did not share was the tacit agreement to actually decode such signals according to their standard meanings, at that precise moment of the exchange. The girl, of course, was at

fault by not supplying the appropriate disclaimers to her signals, a procedure that would normally withhold the man's shift to another level of interpretation — and this may well be one of the manifestations of her hysterical personality. In particular, she did not let him know that the rule she was following required the exchange to remain at the level of reciprocal seduction *only*, and that, for her, genitality is associated with several dangers she wanted to avoid. Normally, the type of understanding at which one operates and expects the other to operate must be carefully established, and any shift of level clearly indicated.[5]

One might explain along similar lines what happened in the case of the Black leader's speech discussed in Chapter 14b, though this is a quite different kind of interaction, involving a public speaker and his audience. In a rally against the Vietnam war, a Black Panther leader denounces Nixon's repression against the Blacks. The audience, predominantly white, becomes increasingly impatient, as the speech takes on increasing intensity, reaching its peak when the speaker shouts: 'We will kill Richard Nixon!' (the audience protests), 'We will kill any motherfucker that stands in the way of our freedom'. The speaker was indicted for threatening the life of the president. The defense claimed that the speaker had shifted — in the course of the speech — to Black English, a dialect in which hyperbole is common, and thus his utterance was not to be understood as a threat to kill.

First of all, we may say that the alleged misunderstanding (on the part of the authorities as well as of the audience) resulted from a failure to 'grasp' that the rules to be applied in decoding the speech had changed to those of Black English, with its specific lexicon (where 'kill' does not mean 'cause to die') and rhetorical devices (normal use of hyperbole). But, in addition to that, there was a further 'misgrasping', by the audience and by the speaker, of the amount and nature of 'protest' shared by both, i.e., of how far each was willing to go in their revolutionary fervor: the shared ground for the demonstration was protest against the external Vietnam war, and this did not necessarily cover protest against the internal oppression of minorities, especially in the light of the fact that the audience belonged (ethnically) to the oppressing majority. It is also possible that the discomfort of the audience was interpreted by the speaker as a sign of support, rather than of disagreement, or even that the audience — much like the hysterical girl discussed above — produced contradictory signals of which 'it' was not 'aware'. At the unconscious level, both the Black leader and the audience probably shared some amount of aggressive

impulses, but not enough to allow for an explicit verbalization of those impulses (as expressed by the word 'kill').

Both cases suggest that grasping involves being able to detect what is not said (or signaled), even when this implies the rejection of the standard interpretation of what is said (or signaled). In particular, it involves the ability to detect what can and what cannot be said (or signaled) in a given situation. If we were allowed to amend the proverb, we might say: 'for the good understander, few words; for the bad, too many'.

3

Given the importance of correctly grasping the appropriate type of understanding, it is not surprising to observe that one employs all sorts of devices, both linguistic and paralinguistic, for that purpose. Though linguistic behavior is normally considered of top importance, and therefore is supposed to draw the other's attention, the need to secure such attention often arises. Hence the frequency of use of such openers as 'Listen!', 'Look here", etc.[6] The addressee's appropriate response is, of course, to direct her gaze toward the speaker. Less than this would be taken as a sign of lack of attention, and hence as an indication either of unwillingness or of disinclination to comply with the 'duty to understand'. Incidentally, the significance of the gaze in this connection shows once more that verbal communication involves more than the use of the acoustic channel, i.e., is more than just 'listening'. The demand to devote all of one's attention to incoming speech indicates that communication is assumed to have high priority, hence that it cannot be properly carried out while one is engaged in some other main activity. It is reasonable to conjecture that a considerable amount of training in early life is devoted to this purpose. Games such as 'peek-a-boo' train the child to direct its gaze to the 'speaker', and thereby to surrender to the latter the control over its gaze and attention, at least momentarily. It is as if the child's attention became for a while the property of the other. Later on, this capacity of 'putting one's mind at the disposal of the other' when communicating becomes a precondition for one's ability to 'grasp', and hence to 'comprehend' the other's communicative acts.

Not only attention must be secured, but also the appropriate mode of attention. Hence the need for devices whose purpose is to 'prepare the ground' or to 'set the stage' for a particular kind of communicative exchange. For

instance, one cannot (usually) just begin to tell a joke without previously indicating that what follows is to be taken as a joke, by means of such openings as 'Do you know the story about . . . ?', 'I heard yesterday a wonderful joke!', etc.[7] One must also make sure that the interlocutor has grasped the level of understanding at which one is operating or towards which one wishes to move in the course of the exchange. For that purpose, one may employ certain 'probing' devices, and monitor closely the verbal and non-verbal reactions of the interlocutor. There is a large family of 'preparatory' speech-acts, which indeed have this function. They include 'pre-announcements' ('Do you know who is coming tonight?'), 'pre-invitations' ('What are you doing tonight?'), 'pre-questions' ('May I ask a question?'), and so on. Similarly, the selection of one of the so-called Indicating Devices may serve to signal expected differences in attitude, between the interlocutors, towards a certain message content. Compare, for instance, 'Let me tell you, . . .' with 'I will tell you, . . .'. Whereas both indicate the illocutionary force of the utterance, the former also suggests that the content is expected to be unpleasant news for the listener, and helps the latter to be 'tuned' to such a possibility (cf. Katriel and Dascal 1984). One might conjecture that, alongside devices such as these, which refer to what has been called above 'comprehending' in its various layers, there are also verbal and non-verbal 'Indicating Devices' that have to do with grasping. Their investigation remains to be undertaken.

Before leaving the topic of devices and processing aspects of understanding, we want to stress what should be clear by now, namely that the necessary grasping cannot be *imposed* by the speaker upon the addressee. It must be, rather, 'negotiated' between them. The probing devices mentioned above are pieces of such a negotiation. Thus, a pre-invitation that is not favorably received will not be followed by an invitation. But negotiation occurs even at the preliminary stage of 'grasping the other's attention'. The following is indeed a quite typical exchange:

> Daughter (while father is reading the newspaper): 'Daddy, you know what happened today?'
> Father: 'Yes.' (with a rising intonation, without lifting his eyes from the newspaper).
> Daughter: 'You are not listening.'
> Father: 'Yes, I am listening. What happened today?' (still, without lifting his eyes from the newspaper).
> Daughter: 'You are not listening. Why don't you look at me?'

Until the negotiation is over — at this preliminary level or at any other level — the appropriate grasping of the duty of understanding has not been secured, and the conversation cannot proceed without being in serious danger of breaking down.

4

The dynamic character of the requirement of understanding is not restricted to the shifts that it undergoes in the course of a given communicative exchange. It shows up also in the evolution of the relationship between two persons, i.e., across many exchanges. There are different expectations of understanding at different stages of an interpersonal relation. In fact, one might go as far as suggesting that the higher such expectations, the bigger the 'intimacy' or 'proximity' of the relationship. Notice that the relevant correlation is between the amount and kind of *expected* (rather than actual) understanding and the relationship's intimacy. For, as is often observed, misunderstandings do occur *very* often between persons engaged in an intimate relationship such as husband/wife. One might contra-pose to this, the commonsensical truism that the closer people are to each other, the better they know each other, and the less they are likely to misunderstand each other. The apparent 'paradox' could be explained as follows: the partners in a close relationship presume that the truism in question is true and act accordingly; in so doing, each partner relies upon the other's ability to 'understand' non-explicit messages to such an extent that misunderstanding is then *more* likely to occur than between strangers, who would not act upon the same presumption.[8]

In a sense, the presumption that misunderstandings will not arise (in a close relationship) functions as a *self-falsifying prophecy*, i.e., as the converse of a self-fulfilling prophecy: the more one believes in it, and acts upon such a belief, the less it comes out true. Consider the belief (by a head of government) that there is going to be a war. Acting upon this belief, he mobilizes his troops, which in turn causes the mobilization of the enemy's army, increasing tension, etc. These, in turn, are (and should be) interpreted as signs that confirm the prophecy, which eventually is finally fulfilled. In a self-falsifying prophecy, on the other hand, signs that should be interpreted as falsifying it are not taken into account, so that the belief is not abandoned — as it should be, on rational

grounds. In our case, the belief that there should not be misunderstandings generates, as we have seen, misunderstandings. Rationally speaking, this should lead to the abandonment of such a belief. Yet, presumably because the couple takes the absence of misunderstandings as part of the idealized view they have of their relationship, actual misunderstandings are not recognized as such (in order to preserve the idealized image of themselves), so that they continue to act upon their belief, thus increasing the possibility of misunderstanding, and finally falsifying their belief.

Besides the stage of evolution of the inter-personal relationship, other variables are likely to affect the amount and quality of the understanding requirements. For example, structural variables such as the socially defined roles of the communicants are crucial in this respect. Thus the kind of understanding a child is likely to expect from a 'father' is different from that he expects from a 'teacher'. In particular, it should be noted that the fact that one and the same person may occupy different roles is a potential source of misunderstandings, due to the different understanding expectations associated with each role. A further exploration of the correlation of these variables with the modes of understanding is beyond the scope of the present chapter. We turn rather to a genetic point of view, which might help to clarify the two modes of understanding, by suggesting a possible origin for them.

5

Let us consider first how the expectations and obligations associated with the mode we called 'comprehension' may have arisen. This might be simply a result of the way in which language and other conventional sign systems become established as such. It is the repeated fulfillment of the expectation or presumption to be understood by using a certain sign that endows this sign with its conventional value. In so far as this conventional value is socially shared, the expectation in question is socially justified, and the interlocutor, who belongs to the same social group (semiotically or linguistically speaking), has a 'duty' to fulfill the expectation in question, i.e., to 'understand'. Now, as a matter of fact, at the initial stages of development, the child finds out that all of his wishes and manifestations thereof are 'understood' and fulfilled. In a sense, this is the result of an excess of 'supply' over the 'demand'. The mother's 'supply' anticipates the child's demands, and pro-

vides a surplus of 'understanding', that the child construes as corresponding to and defining its own demands. This initial situation shapes the child's expectations concerning the amount of 'understanding' it is due. But, in the course of development, the child should learn that only some of its demands are actually 'understood', namely those that make use of the conventional means of communication available. If, as an adult, the person persists in expecting — in all circumstances — that all of his 'signals' be understood in the same way, i.e., if he continues to view the other as having a duty to 'understand' even his implicit and idiosyncratic 'signals' (in some cases, even what is within his mind and is not externally manifested), one may say that this person is behaving in a narcissistic way, insofar as he is considering the other as an image or extension of himself, through the blurring of the differences between himself and the other.

Ideally, 'perfect understanding' would be possible either when the other's mind is entirely manipulable by one, or when one is able to fully 'place oneself in the other's point of view'. In a sense, baby and mother, at the earliest phases of their interaction, display a perfect understanding of each other because each occupies one of these two ideal positions. But 'misunderstandings' soon force them out of these ideal positions they never really held. They are forced both, to differentiate between the obligations and possibilities inherent to 'comprehending' communicative acts that employ conventionalized symbol systems and obey well established rules, and the desire and ability to go beyond this kind of understanding, by being able, at least to a limited extent, to view things as the other does, i.e., by 'grasping' him or her.

One of the reasons for the inability to hold the ideal positions described above lies in the dual function of the mother. On the one hand, she is an instrument for the fulfillment of the baby's desires. As such, she has the 'duty' to read such desires properly. To the extent that she succeeds, she can be credited with 'fully understanding' the baby. On the other hand, however, she must provide the child with 'meanings', through the performance of her specific actions, and also to couple such 'meanings' with appropriate words, so that the child, later on, can identify by itself such meanings, and communicate them appropriately. From a psychoanalytic point of view, there is evidence to the effect that the mind of the baby, at the first stages of evolution, is not differentiated from the important objects that provide for its survival. Such 'objects', furthermore, semanticize and codify the baby's internal world, the former in the sense of providing 'meanings' for the baby, and the latter in the

sense of integrating it into a system of rules which specify what is 'allowed' and what is 'forbidden'.

The concept of 'primary violence' can be used in this connection. According to Castoriadis-Aulagnier (1975), the mother's speech represents, for the baby, the cultural system with all its norms (both linguistic and nonlinguistic), and it conveys all the permitted and prohibited options of meaning. When the baby's mind is confronted with the mother's speech, the latter performs a kind of violation of the baby's mental space, through the imposition of meanings defined from the asymmetric position of mother/culture vis-à-vis the baby, and based on norms that are 'heterogeneous to the (baby's) self'. This kind of 'primary violence' is necessary and cannot be avoided. But it is usually followed by what that author calls a 'secondary violence', i.e., the imposition of further 'meanings', which, unlike the preceding ones, are not necessary for the proper functioning of the self.

In this sense, to 'grasp' the baby's desires at this early stage means to grant the baby some 'meaning' and accept that the baby — within its limitations — is able to perform, with that meaning, its own productions. But if the mother assumes that to 'grasp' the baby's desires amounts to penetrating the baby's mind with her own desires, ignoring the baby's productions (secondary violence), then we have an example of an initial failure of grasping. In principle, the mother must 'grasp' *that* the child has desires (rather than taking her own desires as desires that the child is supposed to fulfill), and also to 'comprehend' *what* they are, i.e., to identify the specific content of such desires. Yet, from the point of view of the baby, the two steps are not distinguished. Furthermore, the baby does not see in the mother an autonomous source of desires, nor a being who is able to either fulfill or not its (the baby's) desires. She is seen just as an instrument, which has the unconditional 'duty' of fulfilling those desires.

In the light of the above suggestions, one should, among other things, reinterpret the principle — formulated by Watzlavick et al. (1967) — that 'one cannot not communicate' (when in each other's presence). The principle may be correct at an early phase of 'communicative' development, where — given the lack of a differentiated system of communicative signs — each and every behavior, say, of the child, is 'interpreted' or 'understood' by the mother at the same level (and vice-versa). Under these circumstances, the child indeed cannot 'not communicate'. Yet, as soon as a set of actions (objects, etc.) acquires (for child and mother) a distinctive semiotic function, the deliberate selection of an action belonging to this repertoire becomes a *specifically* com-

municative act, and, as such, different from other actions or behavior (which, still, can be 'interpreted', but whose main and only purpose is not that of being 'understood'). At this point, the child only 'communicates', in the now restricted sense of the term, if it actually engages in specifically communicative acts. Furthermore, since such acts, as we saw, impose upon their addressees the duty to understand, their performance presupposes the selection of an addressee, which is both able and willing to comply with this duty. That is to say, one will only 'communicate' — in the restricted sense of the term — with persons with whom one shares a repertoire of communicative actions (i.e., a 'code') and whom one expects to have the goodwill necessary to comply with the duty of understanding.[9]

6

In trying, as we did here, to combine concepts from our rather disparate backgrounds (philosophical/linguistic on the one side, and psychoanalytical on the other), some measure of vagueness is inevitable. In order to let the reader comprehend better some of the key ideas we tried to convey, and to grasp the point of view we attempted to define, we add in this section some further clarifications.

In the first place, let us point out that we place ourselves essentially at a phenomenological/experiential level of analysis of communicative exchanges. At this level, we employ a general model of communication, whose key notion is that of 'pragmatic interpretation'. We view the two notions here distinguished, comprehending and grasping, essentially as two distinct modalities of pragmatic interpretation, i.e., as two different but complementary ways of determining the speaker's meaning.[10] Our use of linguistic, psychological, psychoanalytic, genetic, sociological, and other kinds of concepts is subordinated to this perspective, though they are 'imported' into the discussion with their full theoretical background. Thus, when we talk about verbal or nonverbal 'devices' for ensuring grasping or comprehending, we are referring to entities that can be and have been formally analyzed, say, by linguistics, and that can be functionally correlated with our two modes of understanding. The same applies to our use of the sociological notion of 'role', to the psychoanalytic notion of 'narcissism', and so on. In fact, one of our further aims is to explore the correlation between different kinds of pathological behavior and

persistent disturbances in the two modes of understanding. And such an endeavor would have a flavor of circularity were it not possible to characterize first such modes independently, i.e., by reference to the communication model alone.

One concept among those we used requires special clarification, namely, that of 'duty'. Such a term has been chosen because the mere participation in a linguistic exchange involves both the assignment and the acceptance of a series of obligations. For example, if one is asked a question, one *should* reply. Not to do so is breaking a social norm, and a form of violence, eventually subject to sanctions. But it is possible to 'reply' properly only to what has been understood; hence the idea of a 'duty to understand'. Our concern here has been with the basic forms of this duty, as well as with its limitations. Other principles, such as the 'principle of charity' (cf. Dascal 1983:121-124), may be viewed as providing further specification and content to this duty. Their counterpart, from the point of view of the speaker, are maxims like those proposed by Grice, which in fact spell out the 'duty to make oneself understood'. Together, one could view the two sets as constituting the basis for an 'ethics of communication', in the spirit of much that goes under the name of 'transcendental pragmatics' (cf. Böhler 1985). But we don't need nor wish to emphasize the ethical, metaphysical, or 'rational' aspects of the 'duties' here considered. They must be rather viewed as a quite mundane and trivial aspect of our everyday use of language. In fact, it seems to us that the assignment to the rules of language and language use of a 'moral' validity, which requires interlocutors to be excessively concerned with 'understanding' each other, may be related to a not uncommon form of pathological obsession with language.

The use of the term 'duty' might seem questionable when applied to the 'original' situation of communication between baby and mother. But it is no less justified in this context. The baby's motor and psychic helplessness make it entirely dependent, for survival, upon the parents' (or their substitutes') assistance. This situation requires that the parents give 'meaning', i.e., 'understand' the 'signs' emitted by the baby. The ability to satisfy the baby's needs on the basis of such an 'understanding', which is also, as we have seen, an imposition of 'meanings' upon the baby, usually involves a presumption of 'transparency'. Later on, both baby and mother become aware of the opacity that mediates their communication. But the 'duty to understand', characteristic of adult communicative acts, may well be a residue and a direct result of the

primordial situation, inherent to the human condition. As such, understanding always aspires to inherit the transparency and immediacy of the original symbiotic relationship, which, of course, is hardly possible.

The same early relation provides also the foundation for another type of 'full understanding'. This is the ability to engage in what Buber calls an 'I-Thou' relationship, i.e., a true dialogue, where the other is perceived and acknowledged as an autonomous, full-fledged, independent person, rather than as an object, instrumental to the satisfaction of one's own desire. This ability requires one to be able to 'put oneself in the other's point of view', realizing that the other perhaps does not think, feel, or react like oneself, and yet that one can 'understand' him. Both mother and baby, in their early communication, learn to *share* the other's point of view. Once the dependency and obligation aspects of their relationship are overcome, the way is paved for at least the possibility of a sharing that leads to an interaction of the kind described by Buber.

These two poles of the communicative situation are equally extreme in that they characterize either an initial, non-recoverable stage, or else an ideal, hardly achievable model of communication. Nevertheless, one might perhaps account for the modes of understanding found in 'normal', daily, adult communication by reference to these two poles. Thus, we could say that the 'duty of understanding' is in fact a derived and modified form of the indiscriminate 'duty' of 'reading' all of the baby's needs, ascribed by the latter to the mother. The main differences are: (a) now the interlocutor (be it the mother or someone else) is no longer required to 'read' all the speaker's desires, but only to be able to understand the desires (and other mental states) explicitly expressed through the signs of a shared language; (b) linguistic signs replace now the earlier motor responses: instead of a kick, a verbalization, which is more discriminative and purports *to let the other know* rather than *to make her feel* the effects of a motor action; (c) the fulfillment, by the addressee, of the speaker's desires is no longer required either (at least insofar as the communicative process alone is considered), the former's only obligation being that of 'comprehending' the communicative act, as a first eventual step towards further action; (d) now one can eliminate the scare quotes from the word 'duty', since there is indeed a set of communicative norms or rules, shared by speaker and addressee, that impose upon them a *definite* obligation to understand; and (e) such a duty is now generalized to all possible interlocutors

addressed to by one, rather than being restricted only to one's biological or functional parents.

We want to suggest that such a kind of understanding, which is a modified and derived form of the original instrumental manipulation, and which later on is replaced by a compliance with and use of socially established norms, corresponds roughly to the mode of understanding we dubbed 'comprehending'.

The other mode of understanding, namely 'grasping', which is also necessary for the achievement of 'normal' communication, is rather related to the *ideal* ability of placing oneself in the other's point of view. Again, since this cannot be achieved in its ideal form, for one cannot literally be in the other's head and see things with the other's eyes,[11] it can only actually occur in an attenuated form. In this form, one does not share with the other *all* of her mental context, although one tries to share enough of it in order to make communication possible in specific situations. True enough, we cannot see the world with the other's eyes, but we can — and do — coordinate our gazes, so that we perceive more or less the same objects in the immediate surroundings. [12] We cannot be sure that the other really means what she says, but we try to check for this, by constantly monitoring her facial expression, her tone of voice, her hesitations, etc.[13] Given that we are imprisoned in our own selves, within the limits of our own skins or rather mental skins, we cannot submit ourselves entirely to the other's wishes and ideas, but at least we can do our best to 'grasp' them, and, in so doing, put ourselves in a position to comprehend appropriately the communicative acts they direct at us.

Notes

1. For one thing, the other is never identical to oneself, and one is aware of this fact (unless one is operating in a way psychoanalytic language describes as 'narcissistic'); or, to put it logically, analogy and identity are different relations. When the assumption of transparency becomes a conviction, as in Cervantes's story "El licenciado Vidriera'", it becomes a mode of operating often found in schizophrenia. Similarly, small children often have the fantasy that their mind is transparent to their parents. Replacement of such a fantasy by the notion of the opacity of one's mind is a component of cognitive and linguistic development.

2. For details see Dascal (1983). There would be room also to elaborate upon the correspondence between this account, drawn from pragmatics, and what is called, in the theory and practice of psychoanalysis, 'transference', but this will not be done here.

3. On this notion, see Katriel and Dascal 1984; see also Chapters 10 and 14b.

4. In fact, one of the definitions of a hysterical personality refers to the inability of being aware of the significance of one's manipulation of one's own body.

5. Systematic failure to do so — which has been described as a 'disturbance in the indicating function' (cf. Berenstein 1981; Berenstein and Puget 1984) — is characteristic of a certain kind of patients, and may even serve to identify them typologically. Other authors have analyzed this kind of interaction, though in different terms (see Sluzky 1976).

6. The daughter of one of us begins many of her communications with 'Takshiv!' or 'Takshiv rega!' (the equivalent of 'Listen!'). This has constantly been a source of mysterious discomfort. Perhaps the reason for this is that this expression shares its root with 'Hakshev!', the military command, equivalent to English 'Attention!'. Linguistically, one might perhaps invoke Jakobson's 'phatic' function in order to explain the occurrence of 'Takshiv!' 'Listen!', and an occasional 'Hello!' in the course of a telephonic conversation. Psychoanalytically, its source might be the anxiety about the *real* presence of the (silent) other.

7. This is but one of an impressive set of devices employed for what Goffman (1974) calls 'framing'.

8. Since such a pattern of behavior involves in fact a positive feedback, it may easily lead to a serious disturbance, requiring treatment. Most couples would manage to avoid more serious ruptures by breaking the positive feedback loop as soon as they perceive they became involved in it. This can be done, for example, by employing, at that point, the straightforward 'ask her' strategy of clarification (Chapter 22).

9. Thus, if one wants to ask something at a bus queue, one is *not* going to address simply *anyone*: one always chooses — albeit unawares — the addressee, presumably the one who one deems to be most likely to share both the necessary 'code' and goodwill. The same is true — at another level — of the choice of partner for a love relationship, or of the choice of clinician by a patient and vice-versa, etc. In psychoanalytical terms, one might say that the mechanism that is at work here is that of projective identification, conceived as the performance of the actions and the adoption of the assumptions needed in order to fulfill the fantasy of locating in the other one or more aspects of oneself (see Klein 1947; Bion 1967). One acts upon the belief that the other is willing and able to 'understand', just as one is willing to be understood, and, moreover, that the other's understanding is similar to one's own. In philosophical terms, this amounts to the assumption of a basic *analogy* between oneself and the other, as the basis for both the ascription of mental contents to the other and for the expectation that the other will be able to ascribe mental contents to oneself (cf. Dascal 1983: 91ff.). These remarks open the possibility — which will not be further explored here — of a similar discussion of other modalities of identification.

10. We focus here on the addressee. A similar analysis would be required for the speaker's point of view. Presumably, the concepts of speaker's 'commitment' and 'involvement' (Chapter 7) are related to those of comprehending and grasping.

11. It could be argued that, in fact, one does not even really *want* to get literally out of one's own head.

12. The differences due to different points of view are automatically corrected by the optical correction system.

13. In this connection, one may point out that many gestures that accompany verbal communication seem to be stylized and attenuated versions of the corresponding actions: the head movements for 'yes' and 'no' correspond, respectively, to submissive inclination (an act of 'acceptance') and to wrestling oneself from the other's grasp (an act of 'rejection'); pointing is a truncated form of actually grasping an object; and so on. Paraphrasing Freud, one could say that such gestures are 'particles of action' that hint indexically at the whole action — an 'action' which, in normal communicative exchanges, is neither required nor possible, but only faintly perceived as a regulative ideal towards which communication should constantly tend.

Chapter 5

Individual and collective intentions

> We are not ... building up the behavior of the social group in terms of the behavior of the separate individuals composing it; rather, we are starting out with a given social whole of complex group activity, into which we analyze (as elements) the behavior of each of the separate individuals composing it.
>
> *George Herbert Mead*

Analytic philosophers have spent much effort in investigating the logic of the notion of action and its cognates. As a result, we have today a better understanding of the multiplicity of factors that have to be taken into account in a satisfactory characterization of individual action — even though there is still discussion about the precise nature of the 'correct' analysis. Yet, little or no attention has been paid (by analytic philosophers) to collective action. The reason for that is, presumably, either the desire to first tackle the simpler concept (individual action) leaving the more complex one for a later stage, of else an implicit acceptance of 'methodological individualism', i.e., the belief that, ultimately, collective action — as any other social phenomenon — can be entirely accounted for in terms of actions (or other properties) of individuals.

It seems to us that the time is ripe now to try to tackle the important question of the nature and characteristics of collective action. Even if methodological individualism is — in the long run — correct, the analysis of social phenomena in nonreductionistic terms is perfectly legitimate and necessary, just as the analysis of psychological phenomena in 'mental' terms is legitimate and necessary, even though, ultimately, there are neurophysiological facts of the matter that explain those phenomena.

Of course, there are philosophical (and other) traditions which may be much better equipped than analytic philosophy to deal with collective action, since they have always given priority to the social over the individual. But we have chosen, in this paper, to explore the ways in which the insights of analytic philosophy on individual action can at least help to pose some interesting

questions about collective action. Leo Apostel's contribution is particularly significant because he tried to combine different trends in the analysis of individual action into a single coherent whole. His account makes use, among other things, of Searle's analysis of intentional action, which is itself a synthesis of widespread ideas in Anglo-American philosophy and which, besides, has many points of contact with the phenomenological tradition. Apostel and Searle, therefore, will be taken as our analytic base to explore the domain of collective action.

1. Intentionality and action

1.1 John Searle (1981) characterizes an 'Intentional state' as a complex entity of the form 'S(r)', where 'S' is a variable for 'psychological modes' (e.g., hope, belief, desire) and 'r', a variable for 'representative content'. The latter may be common to different psychological modes: whether Tom hopes the Likud Party will be defeated in the coming elections or Tom believes the Likud Party will be defeated in the coming elections, Tom has in mind the same representative content. Some, but not all, Intentional states have, according to Searle, a 'direction of fit' (mind-to-world or world-to-mind), and "all Intentional states with a direction of fit represent their 'conditions of satisfaction'" (1981: 79). Such conditions are the states of affairs in which, if they occur, one can say 'that the Intentional state is satisfied'.

Searle applies this terminology to the case of intentional action, and proposes the following rough statement of the nature of this type of action: "an intentional action is simply the realization of the condition of satisfaction of an intention" (ibid), i.e., of an Intentional state. Notice that, in this case, the conditions of satisfaction must specify not only the action that is to be performed, but also the demand that the action be performed in accordance with the intention or by virtue of it. For, if one performs that very same action (e.g., raising one's arm), say, by chance, the action cannot count as intentional, even though one might have the prior intention to perform it. The conditions of satisfaction, which constitute the representative content of the intention, must then be formulated in a self-referential way, as something like "(that I perform the action of raising my arm by way of carrying out this intention)" (1981: 83).

Not every intentional action depends on the existence of a 'prior intention' (PI). If one suddenly hits a man, without forming first the intention to hit

him, the action may still be intentional. But in this case, the intention is "in the action". One just acts, spontaneously, but still intentionally. Even in cases when there is a PI, there are many subsidiary actions carried by way of fulfilling the PI, "which are not represented in the PI, but which are nonetheless performed intentionally" (1981: 82). I want to drive to my office (this is my PI). I open my car's door, I push the starter, etc. None of these actions are represented in my PI. Their intentionality, according to Searle, lies in the fact that I do have an 'intention-in-action' (IA) in performing them.

Like the PI's, the IA's are self-referential. But, whereas the former are said to refer to the whole action, the latter refer only to the bodily movement involved in the action. Thus, in the case of raising one's arm, the intention-in-action has the following Intentional content: "My arm goes up as a result of this intention in action". A further difference between PI and IA is that the conditions of satisfaction of the former are a representation of the action, whereas those of the latter are a presentation of the movement (89).

The two kinds of intention, the movement, and the action are linked, according to Searle, by a causal chain: "The prior intention causes the intention in action, which causes the movement … [S]ince this combination is simply the action, we can say that the prior intention causes the action" (90). The full expression of the Intentional content of the prior intention then becomes:

(1) (I have an intention in action which is a presentation of my arm going up, which causes my arm to go up, and which is caused by this prior intention) (91).

1.2 What questions does this analysis of individual action raise about collective action? Before answering this question, we need at least a provisional clarification of the notion "collective action". Three paths might be considered for such a clarification: (a) inquiring common sense or "folk-theory" about the applications and meaning of this expression; (b) formulating a typology of kinds of actions, ranging from individual action, through interpersonal action, to group and collective action, by means of clear-cut cases of each; and (c) starting from the observational level, of what might be properly called "group behavior", for which a characterization might eventually be given, and then adding to this characterization characteristics that distinguish the species of "group behavior" that might be properly called "group action" or "collective action".

Let us try first the third approach, suggested by Mead's quote used as motto for this essay. One might consider as examples of group behavior the behavior of a school of fish when, say, it makes a sharp turn from its path into a new direction, or the behavior — as observed by an external observer — of a battalion moving one way or another. At first, the main characteristic of these kinds of behavior might seem to be what we could call the "distributive uniformity" of the behavior. By this we mean the apparent fact that, if the group's behavior is described as "group A P-ed" (where 'P' stands for predicates such as "turn left", "storm the hill", etc.) then each of the group's members can be said to have also P-ed. That is to say, some criterion such as the following would seem to apply to "group behavior":

(2) (A) (Group A P-ed if (x) (if x is a member of A, then x P-ed))

Thus, if a school of fish turns right, then each fish belonging to the school also turns right, and vice-versa. Similarly, if a battalion storms a hill, then each soldier of the battalion storms the hill. Yet, such a criterion is not in fact strictly required for group behavior. In fact, when a battalion storms a hill or "advances to the target", not every soldier of the battalion storms or advances. Some take static positions to cover the others, some may even retreat in order to attract enemy fire, etc. The same is true of the school of fish, if one examines carefully the movement of each of its members. The above criterion commits, in fact, the fallacy of distribution: If Brazil's team wins the World Cup, one cannot infer that Zico, one of the team's players, does so. The winning is the result of the collective action of the team, no matter how important Zico's share in such an action may have been. As such, the winning is undistributable among the individual players, just as the size of a chair is undistributable among its component molecules.

If not distributive uniformity, what then does characterize group behavior? Notice that the uniformity that does not necessarily distribute is the uniformity of the behavior itself (the movements performed, for example). But there may be another factor of the behavior that does distribute among the members of the group. In the case of an action, rather than behavior, one might think of the sharing of a *goal* by all members of the group. Even though not each and every soldier of the battalion actually "storms" the target, all of their actions are guided (determined?) by that goal. In so far as this is the case, one might indeed say that the battalion *qua* group stormed the target. One would then tend to view the different actions as being different components of

a plan, subordinated to an overall goal, shared by all members of the group. A sort of "division of labor".

Could such a characterization apply also to the non-intentional level of behavior, or would it be possible only at the level of (intentional) "action"? We shall return to this question later.

Let us concentrate now on the suggestion that collective action is characterized by some sort of shared intention. We are immediately led to the following questions, suggested by Searle's approach to individual action: (i) Is the shared goal of the group an intention-in-action or a prior intention? (ii) Must the shared goal or intention, whatever its status (IA or PI, or both) be actually *shared* by each member of the group, i.e., must it be distributed into the members' actions?

With the help of these two questions, and reverting now to strategies of clarification (a) and (b), we can now provide a typology of collective actions. For, in fact, there is no single set of conditions (except for the existence of a 'collective intention') that applies to all kinds of collective action. In fact, the elusive notion of 'collective intention' will be disjunctively characterized by the typology here proposed.

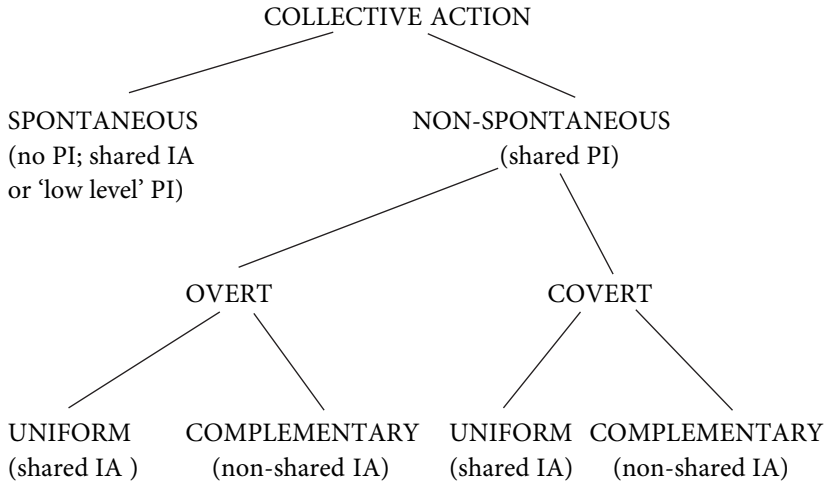
If there is no 'collective' PI, then there can still be a form of collective action that we would call 'spontaneous'. In such a case, the collective character of the action must be ensured by the fact that the members of the group actually share a certain IA. Hence, in this case the intention must indeed be distributed. For instance, consider a group of persons walking in an open field. Suddenly it begins to rain. All the members of the group seek cover from the rain in a nearby house. Their individual actions were guided by no specific prior intention, and all of them can be said to have been guided by the same (or by a sufficiently similar) intention-in-action, namely, the intention of moving their body in a running way. One can further say, to be sure, that such an intention-in-action is caused by a certain 'low level' PI like, say, the intention to reach the house. This seems to go counter our assumption that in 'spontaneous' collective action there is no shared PI. Strictly speaking, the 'low level' PI just mentioned is indeed a 'prior intention' (in Searle's terms). Yet, the above case is to be distinguished from the case in which the group had previously decided to reach the house, independently of the rain. This would be an example of a non-spontaneous collective action — to which we shall turn our attention shortly. In spontaneous action, whatever PI there is — in

the strict sense — it is at most 'low level' and not previously coordinated among the members of the group.

Non-spontaneous collective action, on the other hand, is characterized by the existence of a 'high level' PI, shared by all members of the group. Here we can distinguish between two cases. One of them could be called 'overt' collective action. For example, when all the members of the above mentioned group of hikers have previously agreed to reach the house. The other, which we would like to call 'covert' or 'manipulative' collective action, is the case in which the action of the group is in fact guided by some intention of only some of its members (e.g., the 'leadership'). The rest are led to perform a certain action, in accordance with a shared PI, even though they are not aware of the further intention that in fact motivates it. For instance, suppose the hikers in our example are schoolchildren, whom the teacher — who has planned the excursion — wants to concentrate for a lecture. He may lead the children to perform the collective action of gathering for the lecture in a number of 'manipulative' ways (e.g., warning them of the imminent danger of a thunderstorm), i.e., ways which do not include making them partners to his own 'further intention' (FI). Incidentally, the concept of 'further intention' here employed is needed not only for the present purpose, but also for the characterization of individual action, as acknowledged by Searle himself (see Dascal 1983: 104-105).

If we consider now the intention-in-action, again it can be either distributed or not, regardless of whether the action is 'covert' or 'overt'. When it is distributed, i.e., shared by all agents in the group, we will say that the collective action is 'uniform'. That is to say, all the members of the group perform what is from their point of view essentially the 'same' action. All the hikers in our example intend to run, and actually do run in the same direction. Another possibility is that, though acting under the same PI (either known or unknown to them), members of a group form different IA's (caused by the same PI), which, as a whole, lead to the fulfillment of the PI. In such a case, the collective action should be called 'complementary' rather than 'uniform', and it is illustrated by the examples of 'division of labor' presented above.

We could summarize this typology with the help of the following chart:



By elaborating upon some of the distinctions in this typology, we will be able to both clarify them and see the limitation of an approach to collective action based on the categories developed for analyzing individual action.

Consider first the notion of sharing employed so far to characterize collective action. We have assumed that an intention is shared by a group if all its members have that intention. Yet, such a condition can be shown to be insufficient to define the collectiveness of a non-spontaneous action. Imagine, for example, that all the members of a certain group of people come to have, for different reasons, the desire to stand up, say, at precisely 4 p.m. They form the PI to do so, and when the time comes, all of them stand up, by virtue of their respective prior intentions. Thus, all of them share a certain PI, which is roughly the same. Nevertheless, we cannot say that their action is a collective non-spontaneous action, in spite of the fact that it undoubtedly is non-spontaneous and all the members of the group share an intention.

This hypothetical case suggests that it is not enough for the members to have the same PI. Such a PI must, furthermore, be such that, in its content, it refers essentially to the group as such. This could be achieved, for one, by modifying the self-reference in the intention, from a self-reference to the agent alone, to a self-reference to the 'we' of the group. The form of such a 'content-shared' PI would then be something like:

(3) I have an intention in action which is a presentation of my standing up, which causes me to stand up and which is caused by this prior intention, which, in its turn, is caused by a prior intention of *our* standing up together.

The clarification and elaboration of this suggestion will be possible once we add to the theoretical means at our disposal some further tools.

2. Personality and action

The tools in question may be provided by some suggestions found in Apostel's theory of action, which will thus help to solve some of the difficulties we met so far.

2.1 Apostel (1981a) modifies Searle's account by pointing out, first of all, that intentions, though a necessary condition for action, are only partial causes of action. Only when a combination of intentions with other factors such as volitions, reasons, perceptions, bodily movements, etc. occurs, an action is actually caused in a natural — as opposed to a hypothetical — context. His suggestion is to bring together several accounts that have been proposed in the literature on the philosophy of action, each of them singling out one of these factors or else the undifferentiated aggregation of all of them into a single entity called 'the agent' as *the* cause of action (e.g., Goldman 1976; Sellars 1976; Davidson 1963; Chisholm 1976; Taylor 1966).

Apostel's point of view is, rather, 'mereological', purporting to tackle the problem of the relationship between the whole (the person) and its parts (the person-as-an-agent, the person-as-a-thinker, the person's intentions, reasons, limbs, etc.). This point of view allows for a systematic account of the hierarchy of intentions implicit in Searle's distinction between intentions in action, prior intentions, and further intentions, as well as of the relationship between a global intention to act according to a plan and the sub-intentions involved in it. Such hierarchies are open-ended, in that what functions as an organizing principle (thus generating a 'whole' or organized structure) at level n, can be seen as a part, if seen from the perspective of level n+l. This relativizes Danto's (1965) notion of a 'basic action', and conforms to the intuition that 'complex' actions can become 'basic' after training or sufficient repetition.

The basic idea in Apostel's account is the idea that an action arises as the result of a 'configuration of forces' resulting from the interaction of the various factors that form a 'person'. Such factors include the person's body and the awareness of this body and its parts, as well as the person's Intentional states (beliefs, desires, etc.). They interact in such a way as to produce compatibility and integration: "a person cannot exist if his beliefs, intentions, preferences and body awareness are too strongly contradictory or too strongly incoherent for a too long period" (Apostel 1981a: 153). Thus, a situation in which one has a drive to eat pasta and also a good reason for keeping to a strict diet, both with the same strength, is untenable. This situation, by itself, does not yield action. Furthermore, it produces a pressure towards further interaction of factors tending to solve the conflict in an integrative way. This coherence, besides, must go beyond the set of Intentional states of the subject (e.g., it is not enough that the drive to eat pasta predominates, for the person must also be physically able to actually eat some pasta). The result of the interaction is, in certain circumstances, a Gestalt or configuration that functions as an organizing principle of the body feelings, preferences, beliefs, intentions, etc. It is called a "Gestalt" because it is argued that its causal powers cannot be reduced to those of its parts considered in isolation. And it is this Gestalt that causes action.

Apostel sums up all this in the following definition:

(4) The actor s has an intention and executes the behavior realizing this intention if the integrated force configuration that is the personality of s causes this intention to be formed and if the interaction between the different parts of s's personality causes this intention to be executed by the body of a (part of) s's person (154).

In this definition, we have four relations between five elements. The relations are: formation (F), execution (E), doing (D), and causation (C). The elements are: an agent (s), his or her body movements (b), his or her intention (i), his or her personality (p), and his or her action (a). We can express the definition by the following formula:

(5) $sDa = sEi = (p\ F\ i)\ \&\ (p\ C\ (b\ E\ i))$

It is now possible to compare Searle's and Apostel's accounts of individual action. We can represent Searle's view of intentional action as follows:

(6) sDa = (PI Csr (IA Csr b)) v (IA Csr b),

where 'PI' stands for prior intention, 'IA' for intention in action, and 'Csr' for the special kind of causation introduced by Searle, namely self-referential causation. The disjunction indicates the optional character of the presence of a prior intention, as opposed to the obligatory presence of an intention in action.

The difference between the two accounts is now quite apparent. While Searle is mainly interested in the nature of the causal relation that links intention to behavior, and solves this problem, say, 'semantically', by way of specifying conditions of representation and conditions of satisfaction, Apostel stresses the fact that the agent cannot be eliminated from the definitional clause, where he or she appears in the form of his or her 'personality'. In this sense, his account is genuinely 'pragmatic'. There is no incompatibility, however, between these requirements, so that the gist of both of them can be combined in a single formula (where we omit, for simplicity, the distinction between PI and IA):

(7) sDa = (p F i) & (p C (i Csr b)).

Or, in plain English:

(8) An agent s performs an action a if the integrated force configuration which is the personality of s causes an intention i to be formed, and the personality of s causes this intention to cause self-referentially s's body movement b.

2.2 It is possible to apply this combined account to the domain of collective action by means of the following rather straightforward 'table of transformations':

INDIVIDUAL ACTION (a)	COLLECTIVE ACTION (a')
individual agent (s)	collective agent (s')
s's bodily movement (b)	individual actions of the members of the group (a_1, a_2, … a_n)
individual's intention (i)	collective's intention (i')
individual's personality or integrated force configuration (p)	collective's integrated force configuration (p')

Collective action can be now roughly expressed as follows:

(9) s'Da' = (p' F i') &
& (P' C (i'Csr ((p_1 F i_1) & (i_1 Csr a_1)))) &
& (i'Csr ((p_2 F i_2) & (i_2 Csr a_2))) & ...
& (i' Csr (p_n F i_n) & (i_n Csr a_n))

This amounts to saying that a group or collective performs a collective action just in case there is a collective force configuration that forms a collective intention, and causes this collective intention to induce self-referentially in each individual personality intentions which in turn cause self-referentially certain individual actions of the members of the group.

This rough formulation requires further precisions, but it is already sufficient to both solve some of the puzzles we formulated earlier, and pose in an explicit and clear way some of the main problems of characterizing the nature and kinds of collective action.

Recall our first sketch of an account of the collective nature of an action in terms of 'shared content' ((3) above). Leaving aside the distinction between the prior intention and the intention in action, our formula (9) clearly shows how the sharing of content we characterized in terms of an unexplained reference to 'us' arises: it is the result of the collective intention's (I') self-referential causation of each of the individual intentions of the members of the group. Furthermore, this collective intention itself is now seen to be generated by the 'integrated force configuration' of the group, rather than being just mysteriously given. Of course, this can be thought of as a mere removal of the problem one step back, since one can ask how does such an intention-generating 'integrated force configuration' arise in a group. Though Apostel's account does not provide a solution to this problem even in the case of individual action, we shall suggest an approach to it in the case of collective action in the next section.

Turning now to the characterization of the various types of collective action, it is apparent on careful inspection that (9) accounts only for one kind of 'sharing', corresponding roughly to what we have called earlier 'overt' collective action. As for 'covert' collective action, it will be recalled that it involves both some measure of sharing and some measure of non-sharing of intentions. If we symbolize the 'further intention', which is not shared by the members of the group by i", we can express this kind of action as follows:

(10) $s'Da' = (p' F i'') \& (p'C (i'' C i')) \&$
$\& (p' C ((i' Csr ((p_1 F i_1) \& (i_1 Csr a_1)))) \&$
$\& (i' Csr ((p_2 F i_2) \& (i_2 Csr a_2))) \& ...$
$\& (i' Csr ((p_n F i_n) \& (i_n Csr a_n)))$

The sharing in this case is the same as in (9), as explained above, while the non-sharing is accounted for by placing i" within the scope of the self-referential causation operator.

But the proposed formalization leads also to the possibility of recognizing a further kind of collective action, not envisaged in our intuitive typology. Whereas in both (9) and (10) the collective intention causes, in a somewhat 'external' way, each individual to form specific intentions, it is possible to consider the case in which each individual, qua member of the group *forms* the collective intention itself by himself, rather than so to speak 'receiving it from above'. Thus this possibility characterizes a higher and deeper degree of sharing of the collective intention by the members of the group. It can be formally expressed as follows:

(11) $s' D a' = (p' F i') \&$
$\& (p' C ((p_1 F i') \& (i' Csr (i_1 Csr a_1)))) \&$
$\& ((p_2 F i') \& (i' Csr (i_2 Csr a_2))) \& ...$
$\& ((p_n F i') \& (i' Csr (i_n Csr a_n)))$

3. The formation of collective intentions

Let us turn now to the problem brushed aside above, namely, the issue of the nature of the collective's 'force configuration', and the way in which it 'forms' collective intentions. This problem is in many respects analogous to the problem of collective decision-making or 'social choice'. It is possible, therefore, to rely upon the results achieved in that area. We shall restrict ourselves here to some of Arrow's famous results.

Arrow (1963, 1967) deals with the problem of the generation of a group's choices (or preferences) out of the preferences of its members. He inquires whether there are procedures "for passing from a set of known individual tastes to a pattern of social decision-making", which satisfy certain plausible intuitive conditions (1963: 2). A procedure of this kind is what he calls 'a social welfare function' (1963) or, more generally, a 'constitution', i.e., "a rule which

assigns to any set of individual preference orderings a rule for making society's choices among alternative social actions in any possible environment" (1967: 120). The conditions he considers to be "very reasonable to impose on any constitution" (ibid.) are (i) *Collective Rationality:* "if individual preferences have the structure of a (weak) ordering (thus satisfying the conditions of completeness and transitivity), the social preferences must be also so structured"; (ii) *Pareto Principle:* "if alternative x is preferred to alternative y by every single individual according to his ordering, then the social ordering also ranks x above y"; (iii) *Independence of Irrelevant Alternatives:* "The social choice made from any environment depends only on the orderings of individuals with respect to the alternatives in that environment"; (iv) *Non-dictatorship:* "There is no individual whose preferences are automatically society's preferences independent of the preferences of all other individuals". Arrow's most famous result, which is a generalization of the so-called 'paradox of voting' (discovered — but little noticed — as early as 1882), is the Impossibility Theorem, according to which there can be no constitution satisfying simultaneously all four conditions. In particular, he shows that in environments that contain at least three alternatives, which the members of a society are free to order in any way, there is no non-dictatorial constitution that satisfies the other conditions, and this includes the widely used method of decision by majority of votes.

From our point of view, Arrow's analysis of the conditions on 'constitutions' can be employed as a (partial) analysis of the conditions on the existence of collective 'force configurations' and of the nature of the relation of 'formation' (F) of collective intentions.

For example, a dictatorial intention formation procedure will be one in which only the personality or force configuration of the leader or leaders is taken into account in the formation of the collective intention. If so, the problem of such a formation is reduced to the 'psychological' problem of the formation of an individual intention, and needs not be further discussed here. At the other extreme, we might think of a procedure whereby collective intentions are formed only when the 'configuration of forces' is such that all individual intentions are identical, i.e., something similar to decisions taken by unanimity. In such cases, the procedure's most important component would probably be a stage of 'persuasion', whereby diverging individual intentions become convergent, and an investigation of rhetoric as well as of social psychology would be highly pertinent. Between these two extremes lie

the other cases, for which the Impossibility Theorem shows that there is no 'rational' way to construe a collective intention out of entrenched individual intentions.

In order to understand the significance of this result, it is convenient to recall Arrow's own opening statement about the possible implications of his study — a statement which, incidentally, employs the very same terms we found in Apostel's theory. According to Arrow, just as for an individual "the ability to make consistent decisions is one of the symptoms of an integrated personality", so too for groups "the problem of arriving at consistent decisions might be referred to as that of the existence of an integrated society" (1963: 2n). It follows, then, that either a non-dictatorial and non-unanimous society cannot be an 'integrated society' (in our terms, a group able to perform really collective actions), or else that the 'integration' of such a society, including the formation of its collective intentions, cannot be based on the presupposition that individual intentions are given, prior to the collective intentions, and are constitutive thereof. The latter alternative strongly suggests the impossibility of deriving a theory of collective action based on the principles of a theory of individual action, though it does not invalidate the attempt here made to look for the conceptual means that must be *added* to the latter in order to develop the former.

But, more than that, it questions individualism — be it methodological or of another kind — by suggesting that the assumption of the primacy and independence of individual action vis-à-vis collective action is problematic and might have to be radically revised. Mead undertook to do this quite some time ago, as did Apostel regarding the pragmatic foundations of logic (1981b: 31ff.). Arrow's following statement adds the voice of his authority to this growing choir:

> All non-trivial actions are essentially the property of society as a whole, not of individuals ... The partition of a social action into individual components, and the corresponding assignment of individual responsibility, is not a *datum* ... [H]ow logically do we distinguish between the capacities which somehow define the person, and those which are the result of external actions of a society? ... I think this whole matter needs deeper exploration than it has received thus far... [W]e must in a general theory take as our unit a social action, that is, an action involving a large proportion or the entire domain of society. At the most basic axiomatic level, individual actions play little role (1967: 114-116).

Chapter 6

How does a connective work?
Between semantics and pragmatics: The two types of 'but' — 'aval' and 'ela'

1. The present study is an attempt to formulate the semantic and pragmatic conditions governing the use of the particles 'aval' and 'ela' as they occur in Modern Hebrew conversational usage. Typical occurrences of 'aval' and 'ela' are illustrated by the following examples:[1]

(A and B are discussing the economic situation and reach the conclusion that they should hear the opinion of a specialist in economic affairs.)

(1) A: John kalkelan.
(John is an economist)
B: hu lo kalkelan, *aval* hu ish asakim.
(He is not an economist, *but* he is a businessman)

(2) A: John kalkelan.
(John is an economist)
B: hu lo kalkelan *ela* ish asakim.
(He is not an economist *but* a businessman)

In the context mentioned, the two responses by B in (1) and (2) receive quite different interpretations. In (1) B's response implies that John's opinion should be sought despite the fact that A's characterization of him as an economist is wrong. In (2) B's response implies that there is no point in seeking John's opinion because A's characterization of him as an economist is wrong.

Since both the context of the utterance in (1) and (2), as well as the propositional content of the clauses conjoined by 'aval' and 'ela', are the same, we can conclude that the difference in interpretation is due to the effect of the conjoining particles themselves. The purpose of our study is to investigate the rules which help us assign these different interpretations to 'aval' and 'ela'

sentences in Hebrew. This will lead us to propose a general framework where the 'layers of meaning' of an utterance are distinguished and ordered.

As 'aval' and 'ela' have their counterparts in many languages, either realized as two distinct morphemes (e.g., German 'aber' and 'sondern', Spanish 'pero' and 'sino') or as one (e.g., English 'but', French 'mais'), we hope that our investigation's interest will transcend the study of Semitic languages. Furthermore, we have reasons to believe that the general framework proposed is relevant for accounting for other pragmatic and semantic phenomena as well.

2. 'Aval' sentences have been traditionally described as involving a sense of contrast. This is so up to the present (see, for example, Chayen and Dror 1976, for a transformational approach). Similar observations have been made concerning 'but' sentences in English. It is, however, not very clear what this contrastivnness consists of. G. Lakoff (1971) and R. Lakoff (1971) have convincingly demonstrated that for some sentences containing 'but' the contrast is not due to the semantic opposition of the conjoined clauses themselves, but must be accounted for in terms of features of the context in which the sentence is uttered. Consequently, Robin Lakoff proposed to distinguish between two types of 'but': 'semantic-opposition-but' which conjoins two semantically contrasting clauses, and 'denial-of-expectation-but' for which the contrast is speaker dependent, in the sense that the opposition derives from certain 'feelings' or 'expectations' of the speakers (R. Lakoff 1971: 132-133).

This by now generally recognized distinction has been summarized by Wilson (1975: 118) as follows: "It is well-known that sentences containing 'but' generally imply a contrast between its two conjuncts . . . It is also well-known that sentences containing 'but' may not consist in an objective non-comparability between the states of affairs described, but rather in the contrasting attitude of the speaker to them".

George Lakoff proposed to account for the second type of 'but' in terms of *presuppositions.* Thus, whoever utters a sentence like

(3) John is a Republican, but he is honest (p but q), is said to *presuppose* a general rule like

(4) Republicans are dishonest.

or

(4') For every x, if x is a Republican, x is not honest.

From this rule it can be deduced that if John is a Republican, then John is not honest. That is to say, there is an underlying *expectation* of the form "if p then ~ q", which the sentence "p but q" is intended to deny, in some way. According to G. Lakoff, "the general principle for the occurrence of 'but' is that when S_1 *and* S_2 is asserted and there are one or more presuppositions from which Exp (S_1 —> ~ S_2) can be deduced, then 'but' can replace 'and' and the sentence will be grammatical relative to those presuppositions" (1971:67).

One might argue that Lakoff's proposal is obviously incorrect on the grounds that (3) and (4') contradict each other so that no one could hold both of them true on one and the same occasion. This could be imputed to the alleged vagueness of Lakoff's early notion of presupposition. Yet, with some good will it is possible to rescue Lakoff's proposal by drawing a distinction between the speaker's and the hearer's presuppositions and by modifying (4') accordingly. Thus, one might say that what the speaker of (3) presupposes is that *the hearer believes that Republicans are dishonest*. We shall return to this proposal shortly.

The first type of 'but' is illustrated by sentences like

(5) John is tall but Bill is short.

It seems that in such cases G. Lakoff's principle is not obeyed, since (5), according to R. Lakoff, is acceptable even without assuming that it presupposes, say, that Bill and John are brothers and that brothers are generally of similar height, or the like. In R. Lakoff's words, in this case "no conclusion about the second conjunct is derivable from the first" (1971:133), and this is why it is said to exemplify a different, non-presuppositional type of 'but', dubbed 'semantic-opposition-but'.

A comparison between these proposals and the Hebrew modern usage of 'aval' and 'ela' as illustrated by examples (1) and (2) raises a number of questions. First of all, it must be noted that examples like (1) simply cannot be accounted for by G. Lakoff's proposal, as it stands. For it is clearly absurd to assume that some underlying 'presupposition', of either A or B or both, yields the underlying conclusion "If John is not an economist, then he is not a businessman", which would be required by Lakoff's principle in order to explain the grammaticality of the use of 'aval' in B's reply. And, of course, B's reply is not a case of 'semantic-opposition-but' either. Some modification of Lakoff's principle would be needed in order to account for (1): Instead of a condition involving directly the denial of S_2, Exp (S_1 —> ~ S_2), what is required

is some broader condition involving a contrast between different 'layers of meaning' of the two conjuncts, S_1 and S_2. We shall return to this topic later, in greater detail.

Furthermore, the already hinted at differentiation between speaker's and hearer's presuppositions is needed here, too. We could say that, in (1), for A, John's being an economist would count as an argument (probably the strongest argument available to him) for considering John the required expert. Thus, by saying that John is not an economist, B rejects A's grounds for believing that John is the required expert, but not this conclusion (that John is the required expert) itself. The assertion by B that John is a businessman provides another argument for the same conclusion. B, however, cannot be assigned the belief that the fact that John is not an economist disqualifies him as the desired expert. This differentiation between A's and B's relevant beliefs helps us to avoid the fallacy of attributing to B the belief that "if John is an economist he is not a businessman", which is allegedly derivable from the presuppositions of his utterance.

A further question is whether the distinction between 'semantic-opposition-but' and 'denial-of-expectation-but' corresponds to the distinction between 'aval' and 'ela'. It seems that examples (1) and (2) clearly point to a negative answer, since both cases, if they were to be classified according to R. Lakoff's distinction, should be said to belong to the 'denial-of-expectation' type. Adopting her proposal would therefore lead us to postulate *four* rather than *two* types of 'but' for English (since there seem to be cases in English parallel to all the Hebrew cases we shall discuss, as the English translations of our examples illustrate). Such a multiplication of senses is, to say the least, theoretically uncomfortable.

Furthermore, the key concepts employed by the Lakoffs, 'semantic opposition', 'presupposition' and 'common topic' are rather vague and hardly applicable to the examples in question. The usual (semantic) notion of presupposition is characterized mainly by the so-called 'negation test'. If a sentence S presupposes a sentence S*, then both S —> S* and ~ S —> S*. Now, if we say, with G. Lakoff, that (4) is a presupposition of (3), then we would have to say that (6), the negation of (3),

(6) It is not the case that John is a Republican but he is honest.

implies (4), exactly as (3) is supposed to do. But what does (6) mean? It is not clear at all what is denied in it, and *a fortiori* what it implies. In many cases it is

natural to interpret an overall negative response to a 'p aval q' sentence merely as the denial of q, e.g.:

(7) A: John is a Republican but he is honest.
B: Not at all. He's the greatest bastard I ever met.
C: *Not at all. He is a sworn democrat.

It is clear that such a denial ("John is dishonest") does not by itself presuppose (4). So, it seems that the Lakoffs' presuppositions do not pass the negation test. One might argue that they are not semantic presuppositions but pragmatic ones. But then, they should be carefully distinguished from the semantic variety. This distinction might eventually require either abandoning or carefully explaining the use of semantic notions like deduction, implication, etc. in connection with 'pragmatic' presuppositions. A possible outcome of such a revision would be the replacement of notions of this kind by parallel pragmatic notions like 'argumentation', 'implicature', etc.

If we consider, on the other hand, the concept of 'semantic opposition', we must ask what it does it. Just contradictoriness of the two conjuncts, or also contrariness and even milder forms of propositional opposition? Or else, below the propositional level, any kind of antonymy between lexical items con-tained in the conjuncts? And opposition at the level of the presuppositions or implications of the conjuncts—does it count as 'semantic' opposition?

The clarification of the notion of 'semantic opposition' would certainly be very helpful, but we do not think that it would provide an adequate characterization of 'semantic-opposition-but'. The reason for that is that contrastiveness in 'semantic-opposition-but', just like in 'denial-of-expectation-but', cannot be accounted for entirely in terms of semantic opposition or, in Wilson's words, in terms of the "objective non-comparability between the states of affairs described by the two conjuncts". Consider (5), for example. In spite of the semantic opposition between 'tall' and 'short', the utterance of (5) in certain contexts in which the opposition is, so to speak, neutralized, would be inappropriate ('ungrammatical' in G. Lakoff's terminology). One such context might be the planning of a robbery by a gang, in which a couple of men, one tall and the other short, are needed.

Both Lakoffs point out, correctly, that the meaning of 'but' involves not only contrast but also some sort of similarity between the two conjuncts. It follows from the examples given by R. Lakoff that their similarity lies in the

fact that they contain antonymous pairs, such as 'tall-short'. Similarly, both (8) and (9)

(8) Fords can go fast and Oldsmobiles are safe.
(9) Fords can go fast, but Oldsmobiles are safe.

have the same 'common topic', namely, "virtues of cars"; the difference between the two sentences lies in the fact that (8) focuses upon the common topic, whereas (9) indicates also a contrast between the specific virtues mentioned.

However, just as it is not the conjuncts themselves that determine the nature of the contrast between them, so their contents do not necessarily determine the common topic. Consider, for example,

(10) Carter is tall, but John's father is short.

Clearly, the fact that the two conjuncts refer to "people's heights" does not by itself guarantee that they share a common topic, which would make the utterance of the sentence appropriate. A common reply to (10) might indeed be

(11) What does Carter have to do with John's father?

On the other hand, in (12)

(12) I love you, but don't forget to take out the garbage.

there is clearly a contextually determined common topic in spite of the absence of any strictly semantic connection between the conjuncts.

In general, instead of a sharp distinction between two intrinsically different types of 'but' (and the corresponding two types of 'aval' and 'ela'), we think that there is a range of cases, involving different kinds and degrees of contrast and similarity, which should be handled within a single framework. We think that the Lakoffs' proposals point in the right direction, since they begin to allow for the context of utterance to play an important role in the description of the meaning of 'but' and its correlates. Our objective here is to pursue this line of thought. To this effect we shall outline a pragmatic framework for a unified treatment of the various uses of these expressions.

3. Before presenting our own proposals, let us examine briefly O. Ducrot's treatment of the two 'mais' in French, upon which our own treatment is inspired (cf. Ducrot 1973, 1976; Anscombre and Ducrot 1976).

Concering the 'mais' which corresponds to 'aval' (represented by Ducrot as $mais_{PA}$ — for their correspondents in Spanish and German, 'pero' and 'aber'), two fundamental conditions are given for its appropriate usage: 1) The speaker who employs the sentence form pAq (p aval q) supposes that there is a certain "conclusion" r, such that p is an "argument" in favor of r, and q is an "argument" in favor of ~ r; 2) the speaker believes that q is a stronger argument than p, so that the whole of his utterance, 'pAq', is for him an argument in favor of ~ r.

These conditions seem to apply quite straightforwardly to the Hebrew 'aval'. In the case of dialogue (1), for example, we would have:

p = John is not an economist.
q = John is a businessman.
r = John should not be consulted.

In the eyes of the speaker, p is an argument in favor of r, q is an argument in favor of ~ r, and the whole pAq sentence is an argument in favor of ~ r (= it is not the case that John should not be consulted = he should be consulted).

The same set of conditions accounts for examples in which the opposition between the two clauses is more direct, like (5), or

(13) hu jatsa mukdam min habait, aval lo higia bazman.
(He left the house early, but didn't arrive in time)

Such examples are nothing but particular cases in which the "conclusion" (~ r) is identical to the second conjunct (q).

As for the 'mais' which corresponds to 'ela' (represented by Ducrot as $mais_{SN}$), Ducrot proposes three conditions for its appropriate usage: 1) The first conjunct of a pEq (p ela q) sentence must be negative, i.e., it must be of the form '~ p*' (exactly what kind of negation is required remains to be seen); 2) The second conjunct, q, must be so related to p* that the speaker believes, or wants the hearer to believe that he believes, that q is why p* is unacceptable; 3) q and p* must also be "semantically" related, in the eyes of the speaker, in such a way that q can function as "replacing" p* (in the context).

Again, these conditions seem to apply to Hebrew 'ela'. Consider dialogue (2). We have, in this case:

p = John is not an economist.
p* = John is an economist.
q = John is a businessman.

p is clearly negative; although being a businessman does not exclude being an economist, it is clear that in the context of the dialogue, the former (q) is presented by the speaker as an argument for rejecting the latter (p*); being a businessman and being an economist are, say, 'occupations', so that it is clear that the one term can 'replace' the other.

Ducrot's account thus overcomes some of the shortcomings of the Lakoffs' account. Let us consider how it could be extended to cover cases not considered by him, e.g.:

(14) A: sgor et hadelet.
(shut the door)
B: beseder, aval al titen li pkudot.
(O.K., but don't give me orders)

We could say that in (14) there is some "conclusion" to the effect that "B is going to follow A's orders" or that "B acknowledges A's commanding power over him"; thus, p (to be read as "I will close the door") is an argument for that "conclusion", and q ("don't give me orders") is an argument against it. However, a "conclusion" of this kind can be seen as an assumption A would normally make when issuing a command to B (e.g., concerning their relative status); indeed, it may be said to be a felicity (sincerity) condition for the 'happy' performance of the speech-act of command. If B complies with A's command, he indirectly indicates that the command has been felicitously uttered (or, at least, that he considers it as such). This is in addition to his acceptance of the contents of the command. In (14) the "O.K." conjunct of B's utterance indicates compliance with A's command, and, in our terms, gives support to A's assumption that some relevant felicity condition obtains (e.g., that B recognizes A's commanding power over him); the q conjunct, however, rejects the iliocutionary force of A's utterance and is an argument against such an assumption. According to Ducrot's second condition, B should consider q to be a stronger argument than p, so that B's utterance as a whole counts as an argument against the assumption that B is going to follow A's orders. How can this be reconciled with the observation that B's utterance as a whole marks compliance with A's order to shut the door, and not its rejection?

We can perhaps solve this problem by noting that B's response to A's utterance is a complex, not a simple, response: What B says is that he is prepared to follow A's order on this particular occasion, but that this compliance should not be interpreted to suggest overall acceptance of A's commanding power over him. Thus, B rejects the felicity condition of A's command as it were "on principle", but is prepared to deviate from his generally held position on this particular occasion. (We could say that whatever argument B had for complying with A's order this time was stronger than his unwillingness to recognize A's commanding power over him.)

It seems to us that describing this conversational turn in terms of an argumentative talk exchange would be rather strained: the r we have suggested cannot be strictly regarded as a conclusion, nor can the p and q be properly regarded as arguments (q is not even an assertion). We will try, therefore, to outline a more natural framework for handling 'aval' sentences like this, as well as others not considered by Ducrot. This will involve a reformulation and an extension of Ducrot's proposal.

As was suggested before, in example (14) the function of 'aval' in B's utterance is to indicate a differential reaction to the two components of A's utterance which standardly elicit a single reaction: the p conjunct indicates willingness to comply with the propositional content of A's order, i.e., to perform the necessary steps in order to bring about the truth of the proposition "The door is open". Yet, the second conjunct (q) marks rejection of the illocutionary force of A's utterance. Thus, p and q are not straightforwardly comparable in terms of their argumentative strength: by rejecting the illocutionary force of A's utterance, B undermines the felicity of similar speech-acts in the future, while by accepting its propositional content, B reacts specifically to A's present command.

Consider now the following example with 'ela':

(15) A: hei, bubale, tni xiux.
(Hi, doll, give a smile)
B: ani lo bubale bishvilxa ela giveret.
(I am no doll for you but a lady)

Here B's utterance takes up neither the propositional content nor the illocutionary force of A's utterance but its register: the intimacy register is contested and replaced by a more formal one. This suggests that 'ela' sentences as well as 'aval' sentences can operate on any of the layers of meaning (in the

broad sense) that are contained in an utterance (a claim we shall try to substantiate later).

4. Ducrot's account, so far, could perhaps be translated into Gricean terms (1975): r would be some implicature, in the given context, of p, and q would be either the straightforward denial of r, or something from which such a denial would follow. 'Aval', 'ela' and their cognates in other languages would, then, be the 'cancelation' operators *par excellence*: they would be used in order to *detach* p from its implicature, i.e., in order to indicate the acceptance of p and the rejection of its implicature.

On such an account, the condition for the use of these particles would be the existence of something that *can* be cancelled. Sentences like "He is a bachelor, but he is married" would be ruled out by this condition, since q here (he is married) is *part of the standard meaning* of p (he is a bachelor) and cannot therefore be cancelled out along with the acceptance of p. In general, whatever is *strictu sensu* (i.e., either semantically or logically) implied by p cannot be the q of a pAq utterance.

In fact, one of Grice's criteria for distinguishing between an alleged conversational implicature i and the standard meaning of an utterance p is a cancelation test, which consists in constructing an utterance of the form 'p but q' (where q is, roughly, not-i) and assessing its acceptability. If it is acceptable, then i is indeed an implicature of p and not part of its standard meaning. Such a neat connection between the canceling function of 'but' and the notion of a conversational implicature seems to recommend the latter as a natural candidate for the main role in the explication of the functioning of 'but'. However, as we shall see in a moment, it is doubtful whether the notion of implicature is sufficient in order to account for all the occurrences of 'aval', 'ela' and their cognates.

First of all, let us observe that there are some *prima facie* counterexamples to the translation of Ducrot's argumentative account into Gricean jargon:

(16) A : What's the weather like?
?B : At the moment it's nice, but it will continue to be nice.

In spite of the fact that the p conjunct of B's utterance carries the suggestion (implicature?) that the weather will soon cease to be nice, such a suggestion cannot be straightforwardly cancelled by means of a 'but q' conjunct. That is

to say, not every suggestion (implicature?) of p can function as the 'conclusion' r for which p is a favorable and q is an unfavorable argument.

To be sure, it could be argued that the 'suggestion' in question, although implicitly conveyed by the utterance of p, is not a conversational implicature, since it is not derived *via* Grice's conversational maxims. In that case, it might be alternatively described, still within Grice's framework, as a *conventional* rather than *conversational* implicature of p, related to the meaning of the expression 'at the moment'. Yet, besides the fact that the precise status of conventional implicatures is far from clear, such a modification of the description would not help in fact to explain the unacceptability of B's utterance. For, whatever they may be, it is clear that conventional implicatures are just as cancelable as conversational implicatures: recall the (conventional) implicature of temporal succession attached to 'and'.

Ducrot, on the other hand, has an easy way to explain the unacceptability of B's utterance in (16). One of his conditions for the 'aval' is not satisfied in this case, namely, the requirement that p and q are opposed in their argumentative directions vis-à-vis the intended conclusion r. Let this conclusion be the very natural one: "the weather will continue to be nice". Now, q clearly is an argument in favor of r; as for p, his implicit suggestion notwithstanding, it is also an argument for r. It is the existence of such a natural conclusion, with respect to which both p and q have the same argumentative direction that makes B's utterance unacceptable, except, of course, in very special contexts (those in which the 'naturalness' of the conclusion in question does not obtain). Consider, on the other hand, some other possible — and acceptable — replies to A's question:

(16a) C: At the moment it's nice, but it's going to rain soon.
D: It's nice, but it's going to rain soon.

Whereas the argumentative approach explains these uses of 'but' (in the sense of 'aval') with no trouble at all (letting the conclusion r be the same as above, namely, "the weather will continue to be nice"), the attempt to explain them in terms of implicatures would depend on the dubious assumption that 'At the moment it's nice' has as a conversational implicature precisely the opposite of 'it's going to cease to be nice'. Notice, however, that if A's question, to which C and D reply, were, say "Should I take my umbrella?", then the apparent violation of the maxim of relevance allows one easily to view the replies in question as implicating (conversationally) a positive answer. It seems that the

'farther' the conclusion r is from the meaning of p (and q), the less difficult it is to view it as an implicature.

But, in examples like (14), can one say that what is cancelled by 'aval' is an implicature? Certainly not, because however generous we would like to be, it is hard to imagine that illocutionary forces would be regarded by Grice as *implicated* by the utterance. Notice that even B's response in (17), which is the explicitly performative counterpart of A's utterance in (14), is perfectly acceptable:

(17) A: ani omer lexa lisgor et hadelet.
(I am telling you to shut the door)
B: beseder, aval al titen li pekudot.
(O.K., but don't give me orders)

One might argue that also in these cases the argumentative approach fares better than the implicature-based account, by letting the conclusion be not the illocutionary force itself but something like "I obey you", although this move would open the way as well for an account in terms of implicatures. But here is an example that seems to resist both kinds of approach:

(16b) A: How long is he going to stay?
B: He is here for the time being, but I am afraid he is here to stay.

The argumentative directions in this case are exactly parallel to those in (16), and yet the reply is perfectly acceptable. The reason for this is that, in our opinion, it satisfies the basic condition for the felicitous use of 'but' (in the sense of 'aval'), namely, that a distinction is established between different 'layers of meaning' of an utterance. In this case, the 'but q' conjunct distinguishes clearly the 'outer' layer of 'epistemic modality' ('I am afraid') from the 'inner' layer of propositional content (the length of his stay).

We shall have more to say about these problematic concepts later on. Here we want only to point out that the contrast involved in the use of 'aval', 'ela' and their cognates requires, for its understanding, a much broader framework than the one offered by the concepts of 'argument', 'implicature', 'expectation', 'presupposition', and the like. For, the functioning of these particles involves a sort of "stratification" of the "meaning" of an utterance into several "layers" ranging from the more to the less explicit, from an inner "core" of content to contextually conveyed implicatures *via* layers and sub-layers such as presuppositions, modality, illocutionary force and felicity conditions.

Normally, when an utterance is made, all these layers of meaning are believed (by both speaker and hearer) to be simultaneously conveyed. The point of using an 'aval' or 'ela' utterance is to mark explicitly some particular cleavage between a pair of layers (or sub-layers), or a contrast within a given layer. Such sentences foremost indicate a refusal to accept all the layers of meaning — whatever their nature — of an utterance *en bloc*.

5. Let us consider now some other examples which illustrate the general functions of 'aval' and 'ela' utterances, and which clearly point out that they can indeed operate at any of the layers of meaning of an utterance.

Some preliminary remarks are in order here. First, the phenomena that fall under the labels we are using in order to characterize the various components of the "meaning" of an utterance would not usually be assigned to the area of "meaning", even in the broadest sense of this term. Treating all these phenomena on a par is theoretically justified in so far as it allows for a unified description of the linguistic behavior of 'aval', 'ela' and, we believe, of many other related linguistic facts.

Secondly, in discussing the ensuing examples it will be apparent that the finer distinctions within some of what we have called "layers of meaning" currently proposed in the literature (e.g., different types of felicity conditions, various components of illocutionary force, types of implicatures, etc.) also have a role to play in accounting for the phenomena under study.

Thirdly, the order of presentation of the various layers of meaning hints at what we believe to be at least a partial hierarchical ordering of the layers of meaning (see section 7 for further discussion of this point).

Fourthly, we will disregard fairly obvious structural differences between pAq and pEq utterances, and will focus on the similarities due to their 'canceling' or 'corrective' functions. We will come back to these differences in section 6.

Finally, as we pointed out, the job performed by 'aval' and, to some extent, by 'ela' is to indicate a differential attitude of the speaker towards different layers of meaning. Therefore, strictly speaking, each 'aval' example falls under two layer-labels, one referring to the layer accepted by the speaker and the other to the layer rejected by him. Our subtitles indicate only that layer which is cancelled. In particular, since the 'innermost' layer of propositional content cannot be cancelled by means of 'aval', there will be no subsection titled "propositional content". It is only by taking into account a stratification of

layers within the propositional content that parts of it become cancellable (this will be discussed in section 8).

5.1 Semantic presuppositions and assertions

(18) A: haapifior, shehu hamanhig hajaxid shel hanozrim, nivxar al jedei hakar-dinalim.
(The Pope, who is the only leader of the Christians, is elected by the cardinals)
B: naxon, aval lanozrim jesh manhigim axerim.
(That's right, but the Christians have other leaders)
C: hu lo hamanhig hajaxid ela axad haxashuvim bejoter.
(He is not the only leader but one of the most important)

In both the pAq sentence uttered by B and the pEq sentence uttered by C, a minor assertion of A's utterance is cancelled (the claim that the Pope is the only leader of the Christian world) while its major assertion (that the Pope is elected by the cardinals) is accepted. A reversed pAq sentence which accepted the minor assertion of A's utterance while rejecting its major assertion would not be possible as a response to it.

(18 a) D: *naxon, aval hu nivxar al jedei hanzirim.
(That's right, but he is elected by the monks)

A's utterance, which contains a non-restrictive relative clause, can be said to consist of two non-equal assertions: a major and a minor one. An overall expression of assent to A's utterance is normally interpreted as an acceptance of its major assertion. Thus, a pAq response can be used to accept a major assertion while rejecting a minor assertion, and not vice versa, as is shown by the acceptability of B's response as compared to the unacceptability of D's. In this example 'aval' and 'ela' operate on the assertive level of utterances, marking a hierarchical differentiation within it.

On the other hand, in (19), the appropriateness of A's utterance is contested, by indicating, through the use of 'aval' or 'ela', that one of its presuppositions does not hold:

(19) A: dan mizman hifsik leharbits leishto.
(Dan stopped beating his wife along time ago)
B: aval hu af paam lo hirbits la.
(But he has never beaten her)

C: hu lo hirbits la ela rak ijem shejarbits.
(He did not beat her but only threatened to do so)

By rejecting one of the presuppositions of A's utterance, B accepts part of its meaning, the proposition that Dan does not beat his wife, but rejects the suggestion that he once did beat her, thus invalidating A's utterance as a felicitous assertion. C's pEq response, which indicates that one of A's presuppositions is not true, has the same effect. Yet D, who accepts a presupposition of A's utterance, while rejecting its assertion, cannot be said to have uttered an appropriate response to A's words:

(19a) D: *aval hu od marbits la.
(But he still beats her)

It is not that A's assertion cannot be denied, but this will normally be done by a simple sentence of denial, and not by the use of 'aval':

(19b) E: lo naxon, hu od marbits la.
(You are wrong, he still beats her)

However, note that F's and G's responses would be appropriate replies to A's utterance:

(19c) F: aval shamati shehu od marbits la.
(But I heard he still beats her)
G: shamati shehu hitxil, aval ani lo xoshev shehu hifsik.
(I heard he started but I don't think he stopped)

F's utterance contrasts (though somewhat indirectly) F's own epistemic attitude with that of the addressee; G contrasts his own epistemic attitudes in relation to two components of A's utterance. That is, these utterances do not refer to states of the world and presuppositions about them, but to the speaker's or hearer's epistemic attitudes concerning them. 'Aval' and 'ela', then, can be said to operate on the epistemic modality contained in (or implied by) the utterances in question. As we shall see in section 5.3, 'aval' and 'ela' can standardly function within the modality layer of meaning.

5.2 Illocutionary force

A general example of a pAq response in which the illocutionary force of the preceding utterance is questioned is given in (14).

In our discussion of 'aval' and 'ela' as operating on the illocutionary force of an utterance, we draw on Hare's (1971) distinction between the 'phrastic', the 'tropic' and the 'neustic' of an utterance. The term 'phrastic' denotes the propositional content of an utterance. The term 'tropic' refers to the 'mood' of the utterance; it differentiates imperatives, indicatives, interrogatives, optatives, etc. The term 'neustic' is used to refer to the commitment of the speaker to what he says, be it an assertion or any other speech act. The illocutionary force of an utterance is the result of the combination of its tropic and neustic. We will see that 'aval' and 'ela' can operate on any one of these three sub-layers of meaning.

(20) A: zrok haxutsa et kol haxomer haze.
(Throw out all this material)
B: beseder, ani ezrok oto, aval ani jodea shemaxar tirtse oto shuv.
(O.K., I'll throw it out, but I know that tomorrow you'll want it again)
C: ata lo mamash mitkaven sheezrok oto ela stam omer.
(You don't really mean that I should throw it out but just say so)

Both the responses of B and of C indicate that A's command is accepted as such (i.e., the tropic is accepted) and what is cancelled out is A's commitment to this command (the neustic).

(21) A: lo jadati im ata muxan la'azor lanu.
(I didn't know whether you'd be ready to help us)
B: Aval ma hasheela bixlal?
(But there's no question about it)
C: ata lo tsarix levakesh ela pashut lomar.
(You don't have to ask (for help) but just say (you need it))

Here B indicates that he accepts the content of A's question (the phrastic) and uses 'aval' to reject its mood (the tropic). C, by using 'ela', explicitly rejects the tropic 'request' and replaces it by another one (perhaps 'demand' or even 'command').

(22) A: lama hu hegiv kax?
(Why did he react that way?)
B: haja meanjen ladaat, aval lama lexa lishbor et harosh?
(It would be interesting to find out, but why should you wreck your brain?)
C: zu lo beaja shelxa ela shelo.
(It's not your problem but his)

B acknowledges A's question as a valid one (accepts the tropic) but questions A's commitment to it (rejects the modalized neustic). C explicitly states that there is no necessity for A to have a commitment to the question he poses and says that somebodyelse should pose it.

5.3 Modality

'Aval' and 'ela' can both operate within the layer of modality.

(23) A: efshar lidxot et habxina lashavua haba.
(It is possible to postpone the exam for next week)
B: aval nikbeu kvar shalosh bxinot lashavua haba.
(But three exams have already been set for next week)
C: ze lo sheefshar ela muxraxim.
(It's not possible but obligatory)

In B's utterance, 'aval' cancels the modal force (attached to the phrastic) of A's utterance (implying 'it is not possible' as opposed to A's 'it is possible'). In C's utterance the modality of A's utterance is rejected and replaced by a different one ('necessity' takes the place of 'possibility'). 'Ela' requires that the cancelled and replacement elements (in this case the modal operator) should be explicitly mentioned, not only implied.[2] Notice, however, that an utterance like

(23 a) ?D: ze lo efshari ela bilti efshari.
(It is not possible but impossible)

is redundant (and would only be used as a linguistic correction): 'ela' is used, when what the speaker takes to be the 'correct' answer is not directly implied by the negation of what he takes to be the 'error', as in the case of the pair 'possible / impossible'.

It should be noted that modality is a feature of meaning that can be superimposed on the phrastic, on the tropic or on the neustic: in example (22) it is in fact the modality of the neustic that is questioned, while in example (23) it is the modality of the phrastic.

Similarly, it is reasonable to assume that presuppositions underlie each one of these three components of meaning as well as their modal versions. So that, strictly speaking, the sub-layers to be distinguished should be something like:

— non-modal phrastic
— presuppositions of the above
— modalized phrastic
— presuppositions of the above
— non-modal tropic
— presuppositions of the above
— modalized tropic
— presuppositions of the above
— non-modal neustic
— presuppositions of the above
— modalized neustic
— presuppositions of the above

5.4 Felicity conditions

Example (24) shows that 'aval' can operate on the layer of meaning referred to as 'felicity conditions':[3]

(24) A: ten li et hasefer haze bematana.
(Give me this book as a present)
B: aval ata lo tsarix et ze.
(But you don't need it)

B's utterance cancels a felicity condition of the speech-act of 'requesting', namely, that the person asking for the gift wants it.

Following Searle (1969), we make a distinction between different types of felicity conditions: 1. Preparatory conditions — the person performing the act must have the right or authority to do so, or the occasion of the utterance must be appropriate to the performance of the act. 2. Sincerity conditions — the person performing the act must do so with the appropriate beliefs or feelings. 3. Essential conditions — the person performing the act is committed by the illocutionary force of his utterance to certain beliefs or to a particular course of action.

As the following examples illustrate, 'aval' and 'ela' can cancel felicity conditions belonging to any one of the aforementioned types.

(24) A: ptax et hadelet, bevakasha.
(Open the door, please)

B: aval hi ptuxa.
(But it's open)
C: hi lo sgura ela rak nireit sgura, ki hi mizxuxit.
(It is not closed but only looks closed because it is made of glass)

Here, it is a preparatory condition of commands and requests that is cancelled, namely, the condition that the addressee be in a position to perform the required act.

(26) A: ata lo roe shehadelet ptuxa?
(Don't you see that the door is open?)
B: ani lo iver, aval im ata rotse sheesgor ota, lama ata lo omer jashar?
(I am not blind, but if you want me to close it, why don't you say so straight out?)
C: ata lo rotse lesaper li et ze leidiati bilvad ela levakesh sheesgor ota, naxon?
(You are not telling me about it just for my information but you want me to close it, right?)

Here, an essential condition, namely, that A's utterance counts as a request of information is cancelled by the "aval' and 'ela' utterances which are, in fact, used to identify the kind of (indirect) speech act which A's utterance is used to perform.

The cancelation of a felicity condition by means of 'aval' and 'ela' invalidates the purported speech act it refers to. In this, its effect is similar to that of pAq or pEq utterances in which either the neustic or the tropic is questioned. The difference between the two types of invalidation of the speech act is one of specificity. Whereas there may be several types of speech act with the same tropic and neustic which differ in terms of their felicity conditions, the converse is not true: we cannot have speech acts which share the same felicity conditions but differ in terms of their tropic or neustic. It is an open question whether felicity conditions do or do not properly constitute a distinct layer of meaning but rather sublayers of the tropic and neustic. Moreover, it is still not clear to us where the essential conditions would stand in the framework just outlined: they do not seem to be of the same order as preparatory and sincerity conditions (see section 6 for further discussion of this point).

5.5 Conversational implicatures

(27) A: ma deatxa al rosh hamemshala haxadash shelanu?
(What do you think of our new Prime Minister?)
B: jesh lo isha xaxama, aval ani lo mitkaven lirmoz shehu atsmo lo beseder.
(He has a clever wife but I don't mean to imply that there is anything wrong with him)

Here 'aval' cancels an ironical implicature, which may be derived from the p conjunct of B's utterance.

(28) A: ata jodea, moshe kohen over dira.
(You know, Moshe Cohen is moving away from here)
B: lo jadati, aval bishvil ma ata mesaper li et ze?
(I didn't know, but what are you telling me this for?)

The implicature here is of a different type: A makes an informative contribution about Moshe Cohen, and B interprets it as such; however, since he does not acknowledge the relevance of A's utterance to the "accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange" (to use Grice's phrase), he proceeds to question A's conversational purpose in making his statement. What is cancelled in this case, or, rather, questioned, is A's adherence to the 'super-maxim' (R).[4]

Another type of what might be seen as a conversational implicature concerns the 'argumentative direction' of utterances. Examples of this were discussed in section 4 with reference to (1)-(2) and (16)-(17), in terms of Ducrot's conditions, according to which in an acceptable pAq utterance the argumentative direction of q is opposed to and overrides that of p.

5.6 At times it is not that easy to determine what it is that the 'aval' of a pAq sentence is intended to cancel. Consider, for example, the following dialogue written by Shlomit (9 years old):

(29) zvuv: . . . haxaim sheli kashim, ata jodea?
(Fly: My life is hard, you know?)
pil: ken, ani jodea, aval ani rotse sheata tesaper li al haxaim shelxa.
(Elephant: Yes, I know, but I want you to tell me about your life)

Here 'aval' can either be interpreted as canceling an implicature related to the Maxim of Quantity (i.e., that all the relevant information has been already

given or is available to the addresse) or, perhaps, a preparatory condition concerning the forwarding of information (you do not usually tell somebody who already knows). Therefore, this kind of example is hard to classify under one of the headings of this section.

6. In our discussion so far we have mainly focused on the common function of 'aval' and 'ela' as 'canceling' or 'correcting' devices. We will now turn to the differences between them, some of which have been suggested earlier:

(i) Whereas a pAq utterance functions so as to separate *different* layers or sub-layers of meaning, with its p conjunct indicating acceptance of one layer and its q conjunct indicating rejection of another (or the other way round), a pEq utterance functions so as to relate statements belonging to *the same* layer of meaning: its p conjunct normally indicates rejection of one element, and its q conjunct indicates its replacement by another, of the same order.

(ii) pEq utterances, as we have seen, are symmetrical in the sense that they explicitly mention both the cancelled element and its replacement. This is not the case with pAq sentences. In fact, the p conjunct in the latter is often abbreviated by a general expression of assent or dissent (e.g., naxon — that's right; beseder — O.K.; lo naxon — that's wrong, etc.). In some cases p can be completely deleted so that we get a surface form 'Aval q' (e.g., examples 19, 21, 23). In utterances of this type the deleted p conjunct marks implicit acceptance of one layer of meaning[5] and the q conjunct marks explicit rejection of another. With 'ela', a similar deletion of the p conjunct is not possible; hence, 'ela' is never found in sentence-initial-position, where 'aval' can commonly occur.

(iii) Structurally parallel pAq and pEq utterances (e.g., (1) and (2)) both contain a negation element in their p conjuncts; however, the negation has a different function in each. In pAq sentences the negated p conjunct constitutes a negative assertion; it asserts that something is not the case as compared to asserting that it is. A negative assertion is not necessarily related to either the verbal or the non-verbal context; when it is related to a previous statement it may be used either to reject or to confirm it. Thus, both (30) and (31) would be acceptable in the appropriate context:

(30) You are right, he is not here today.
(31) You are wrong, he is not here today.

In a pEq sentence the negated p conjunct expresses *denial,* that is, rejection of a previously made statement (or previously held belief as recognized by the speaker). This type of negation is invariably related to the context of utterance, and can be used only in rejecting a previous statement, not in confirming it.

Lasnik (1975: 301) has referred to the negation found in pEq sentences as undergoing a process termed 'Attraction to Focus': "Attraction to Focus (AtF) is responsible for the interpretation of negation in example (65) 'I didn't see John. I saw Bill.' AtF 'zeroes in' on an item with extra heavy stress, and semantically erases it. That is, the stressed item is labeled incorrect, and its slot is designated to be correctly filled".

The difference drawn between these two types of negation is made clear by the following observations concerning pAq and pEq sentences:

a. The requirement for a negated p in a pEq utterance is not satisfied by 'semantic negation' (e.g., the fact that the predicates in p and q belong to the same 'antonymous set' — cf. Katz 1972); with pAq sentences this type of negation is quite acceptable:

(32) A: ze bilti efshari.
(It is impossible)
B: ze bilti efshari, aval ze ratsui.
(It is impossible, but (it is) desirable))
C: *ze bilti efshari ela ratsui.
(It is impossible but desirable)[6]

(33) A: ze bilti efshari.
(It is impossible)
B: ze lo bilti efshari aval (ze) kashe
(It is not impossible but (it is) difficult))
C: ze lo bilti efshari ela kashe.
(It is not impossible but difficult)

With normal stress and intonation, lexical negation can have the function of negative assertion but not of pragmatic denial. This is why the response of C in (32) is not acceptable. In (33), however, where the lexically negated term is itself further negated, the p conjunct as a whole can function as pragmatic denial so that both 'aval' and ela are acceptable.

It should be noted, though, that the fact that the p conjunct in a pAq sentence is negated does not necessarily imply that it functions as pragmatic denial, for it may just as well function as confirmation. For example:

(34) A: ze lo bilti efshari.
(It is not impossible)
B: ze lo bilti efshari (affirmation) aval ze kashe (rejection of A's optimistic note).
(It is not impossible but it is difficult)
C: ze lo bilti efshari (affirmation) ela kashe.
(It is not impossible but difficult) (see n. 6)

In order to deny something we have to identify it explicitly; since pEq sentences always involve denial, it follows that the requirement of explicitness discussed above (ii) is, on the whole, pragmatically motivated.

b. A common variant of pEq sentences is the construction

(35) ein kan ela gvina.
(There is nothing here but cheese)

while its would-be corresponding 'aval' sentence is not acceptable:

(36) *ein kan aval gvina.

In (35) there is maximal deletion of material from the full underlying pattern of the pEq sentence. What this utterance says is that all possibilities for identifying the 'object' referred to are rejected, except the one mentioned in q. In 'regular' pEq sentences it is a particular possibility (the one entertained by the addressee) that is rejected; therefore it must be explicitly mentioned (which explains why there is less deletion of material) before it can be 'replaced'.

It is worth venturing some generalization based on the preceding observations. Let us suggest that both conjuncts of a pEq sentence share a certain type of existential presupposition. Thus, in

(37) Haganav hu lo shlomo ela moshe.
(The thief is not Solomon but Moses)

each conjunct would have as a presupposition: "There is someone (out of a given set of individuals), such that he is the thief", i.e.,

(37a)(∃y) ((ix) Gx) = y)

(where 'i' is the iota-operator, and y's and x's domain is the set of human individuals). And in

(38) shlomo hu lo angli ela amerikai.
(Solomon is not an Englishman but an American)

the conjuncts would each presuppose that there is some predicate (out of a given family of predicates) such that it is the one that Solomon is intended to have, i.e.,

(38a) $(\exists\Phi)\ ((j\Phi)\ \Phi s) = \psi)$

(where 'j' is the iota-operator as applied to predicates, ψ's and Φ's domain is the family of predicates including the various nationalities, and the (required) complication involved in the expression 'intended to have' is ignored).

Now, the assertions of (37) and (38) can be represented as:

(37b) $\sim ((ix)Gx) = s)\ \&\ ((ix)Gx) = m)$
(38b) $\sim ((j\Phi)\Phi s) = E)\ \&\ ((j\Phi)\ \Phi s) = A)$

In other words, in uttering a pEq sentence the speaker denies the assumption he believes the hearer to hold that a particular element of the domain of the variable (the one focused in p) is the element which is responsible for the truth of the existential statement, at the same time attributing such a responsibility to another element of that domain (the one focused in q). The unacceptability of (36) (*ein kan aval gvina) is due to the fact that pAq sentences do not have existential presuppositions of this kind. This ties in with two other points already mentioned:

1. The fact that a pEq sentence may involve deletion of material from the surface structure of either its p (33) or its q (32) conjunct is due to their shared presupposition which allows for "recoverability" of deleted material in contradistinction to pAq sentences (which may, however, involve a different type of deletion, as discussed in (ii)).

2. Viewing the focused elements in the two conjuncts of a pEq sentence as instantiations of roughly the same existentially quantified formula helps explain why they must operate on the same layer of meaning: we can say that any layer of meaning can be focused upon and identified explicitly, but it seems clear that expressions belonging to different layers cannot belong to the appropriate set or family of terms, and are thus unable to instantiate the same existential formula in the required way. Hence, also, the 'semantic' relatedness noted by Ducrot with respect to the p and q of pEq sentences.

In this section we noted a number of structural differences between pAq and pEq sentences: the fact that pEq but not pAq sentences require explicit

mention of both the term 'cancelled' and its 'replacement'; differences in type of negation; differences with respect to deletion of material from surface structure; the fact that pEq sentences operate within the same layer of meaning, while pAq sentences involve separation between layers.

All these differences can be related to the different varieties of corrective speech-acts pEq and pAq sentences are used to perform: pEq sentences are more narrowly used to identify an error and correct it in a straightforward manner. pAq sentences have a broader and less direct corrective function: rather than replacing an incorrect by a correct belief, they are used to identify the grounds for rejecting some part of a statement — and these can be found at different layers of meaning. It seems, then, that a characterization of the specific speech-acts pAq and pEq sentences are used to perform would chime in with our description of 'aval' and 'ela' as canceling devices. One might say, for example, that when pAq sentences are used in an 'argumentative' talk exchange they normally perform the function of questioning either the warrant or the backing of an argument (cf. Toulmin 1958), whereas pEq sentences have the function of counter-assertions, which not only contest a claim but replace it by another. (See Ducrot's second and third conditions for *mais*$_{SN}$). On the other hand, pAq and pEq utterances share a common characteristic with respect to the positions they can occupy in discourse. In Schegloff and Sacks' (1973) terminology, to say that 'aval' and 'ela' utterances typically function as reactions in discourse, and cannot serve to initiate a conversation, is to say that pEq and pAq utterances can function only as second pair parts in adjacency pairs.[7] The pair type utterances they are associated with are "offer/acceptance, refusal", "argument/agreement, disagreement", etc.

7. In previous sections it was shown how 'aval' separates between different layers of meaning, and it may appear that its canceling function is not constrained in any way. However, this is not so. In this section we will argue that a very general principle is here at work, which governs the alternation of acceptance and rejection of p and q in terms of the layers of meaning they refer to.

Let us assume that the different layers of meaning are at least partly ordered in a hierarchical manner, starting from the inner 'core' of propositional content up to the outer 'shell' of conversational implicatures, through all the layers discussed in section 5, in their order of presentation.

Our principle states that *when a pAq sentence is uttered as a reaction to an utterance U, the meaning layer of U rejected by the utterance of the pAq*

sentence is either more 'external' than or as 'external' as the meaning layer accepted by it.[8]

This principle fits all the occurrences of 'aval' studied so far. For example, in (19) B accepts the assertion of A's utterance but rejects one of its presuppositions; in (20) B accepts the tropic of A's utterance while rejecting its neustic; in (24) B acknowledges A's utterance as a command, pointing out that one of its felicity conditions does not hold, and so on.

The following exchanges seem, on the face of it, to be counter-examples to our principle since the meaning layer accepted by the pAq sentence seems, at first glance, to be more external than the one rejected by it. However, a closer look shows that they do not in fact violate the principle:

(39) A: ptax et hadelet.
(Open the door)
B: eix sheata rotse aval hi lo tipatax.
(As you wish, but it won't open)

B's response seems to go against out rule: the speaker accepts the tropic of A's utterance, i.e., he accepts it as a command, yet he seems to reject its content, the phrastic. However, a closer look reveals that what is actually rejected here is a (preparatory) felicity condition — which is more 'external' than the tropic — concerning the speaker's ability to carry out the command (e.g., he may have already tried to open the door several times, and knows it won't open, but is prepared to do so again in order to avoid an argument, but not without protesting).

(40) A: hitnatsel bifnei haadon.
(apologize to this gentleman)
B: nir'e sheata be'emet mitkaven laze, aval ani bexol zot lo etnatsel.
(You seem to really mean it, but I won't do it anyway)

Here B acknowledges the neustic of A's utterance, but seems to reject its order character (the tropic). This would go against our rule. However, B's rejection in fact refers to the perlocutionary level of the utterance; it is a refusal to obey, not a refusal to acknowledge A's utterance as an order.

(41) A: ma ledaatxa tsarix laasot?
(What do you think should be done?)
B: ze sheata shoel ze tov, aval zu lo hasheela shetsarix lishol.

(The fact that you ask is welcome, but this is not the question you should ask)

This, too, seems to be a counter-example to our rule, since B's response accepts the tropic of A's utterance, yet seems to reject its phrastic. However, what is in fact rejected is the modality attached to the neustic, since it refers to the necessity of asking a question, not to its actual content.

Having formulated, exemplified and defended our rule, let us now proceed to suggest two possible applications of it:

(i) Our rule can provide a means for ordering the subtypes of felicity conditions proposed by Searle, who did not explicitly envisage a hierarchical order between them (although the term 'essential' is, of course, suggestive). To be sure, the rough suggestions that follow should be checked against more detailed analyses of speech acts, particularly of indirect speech acts (see for example Searle 1975b). Consider

(42) A: There's no air in this room.
B: You seem to imply that I should open the window, but it's already open.
B': You seem to imply that I should open the window, but you can't really mean it.
(essential condition accepted, preparatory and sincerity conditions rejected)
C: The window is, indeed, closed, but you don't really want to suggest that I should open it.
C': *The window is, indeed, closed, but you seem to imply that I should open it.
(preparatory condition accepted, sincerity condition rejected, *essential condition cannot be rejected*)
D: You probably mean that I should open the window, but it's already open.
D': *you probably mean that I should open the window, but you seem to imply that I should open the window.
(sincerity condition accepted, preparatory condition rejected, *essential condition cannot be rejected*)

The results of our cursory test, assuming the generality of our principle, indicate that essential conditions form the innermost sub-layer within the layer of meaning which consists of felicity conditions, and that preparatory and

sincerity conditions are unordered with respect to each other. Furthermore, beyond this particular example what this test shows is a potential 'use' of our rule as a measure for structuring the various layers of meaning conveyed by an utterance.[9]

(ii) A second application of our rule is an account of some rather puzzling 'aval' sentences involving non-attributive uses of definite descriptions of the type described by Keith Donnelan (1966):

(43) A: The man who is drinking whisky stole the car.
B: Yes, but he is not drinking whisky.
C: *Yes, but he did not steal the car.

Why is B's response acceptable while that of C is not? A's utterance contains a definite description used to refer to some particular man who is the 'object' to which the predication 'stole a car' applies. The definite description has an under-lying presupposition — 'a certain man is drinking whisky'. B's response indicates acceptance of the 'message' as a whole while rejecting its presupposition. In fact, it is not the whole presupposition that is rejected, since the sentence 'A certain man is drinking whisky' can itself be decomposed into 'There is a man' and 'He is drinking whisky'. The pAq response cancels only the second one, leaving the existential presup-position intact (as the use of 'he' in the q of B's utterance suggests). It is therefore still possible to accept the assertion, even if the definite description cannot be relied upon for identifying the 'object', provided that B has some other grounds for establishing the referent (perhaps non-verbal communication like a gesture, or the fact that there is only one man in the room who is holding a glass, etc.).

C, on the other hand, apparently accepts not the predication of A's utterance, since he goes on to reject it in the q conjunct, but something else. Yet there is no natural candidate for the role of that 'something else', because there seems to be no layer which is more internal than the one of predication in this case. Hence the unacceptability of C's response.

Both the fact that B is acceptable and that C is not are thus accountable in terms of our general rule concerning the function of 'aval', given the at least intuitively justified claim that presuppositions are more 'external' layers of meaning than the prepositional content of the assertions they underly.[10]

Further applications of our rule would concern distinctions such as 'new and old information', 'topic and comment', etc. For example, we can say intuitively that we cannot accept 'new information' while rejecting the 'old

information' contained in the same utterance. That the rule can be applied does not in itself imply that the above notions require the postulation of a distinct layer of meaning, although this possibility remains open as one way of incorporating additional components of meaning into our framework (e.g., it seems that we would need a distinct layer for perlocutionary forces, cf. ex. (40)).

It may also turn out that there is some overlap between the labels we have employed in outlining the layers we think play a role in terms of the meaning of an utterance. We suspect for example that there is at least some overlap between the notion of 'essential condition' and the notion of 'neustic', and, more generally, we are not sure that felicity conditions should be taken to form a layer of their own. But these questions must be left for further research.

8. Examples like (43) should be distinguished from cases like

(44) A: ben dodxa siper li al ze.
(Your cousin told me about it)
B: ani jodea shehu diber itxa, aval ani batuax shehu lo siper lexa shum davar.
(I know he spoke to you, but I'm sure he didn't tell you anything)

Here we have a pAq sentence in which it is not a presupposition (like in (43)) or some other 'external' component of meaning that is cancelled, but rather something which belongs to the innermost core of meaning, propositional content itself. The purpose of B's utterance, in this example, is to indicate B's acceptance of some of the components of the propositional content of A's utterance (particularly, of its verb), coupled with the rejection of other components. One may indeed say that 'siper' (told) implies (or contains as a meaning feature) 'diber' (spoke), from which it is distinguished by having, in addition, some other, more specific feature (say, "revealed"). B is clearly accepting the implied feature ("spoke") while rejecting the more specific one ("revealed").

Other examples point similarly to the need of distinguishing, within the layer of propositional content, between several sub-layers of meaning, which allow for the use of the cancelation operator 'aval'. Consider the following adaptation of one of Cohen's (1971) examples:

(45) ze perax, aval miplastik.
(It's a flower, but it's made of plastic)

Here 'aval' cancels part of the dictionary meaning of 'flower', namely, the suggestion of growth, life, etc.

Cohen (1971:68n) argues: "It emerges that an order of relative im-portance has in any case to be supposed for the set of distinctive features that characterize a particular meaning. So the less important features will normally be the ones that are exposed to cancelation or deletion in literal usage . . . e.g., the prefix 'plastic' deletes the notion of growth implicit in the meaning of 'flower' but not the feature of outward appearance".

This suggestion of the existence of varying degrees of 'centrality' of the semantic features of a term, which is paralleled by other suggestions concerning the existence of a whole gradient of 'semantic relevance' among such features (see Dascal 1976), leads naturally to the following extension of our general rule for 'aval':

When a pAq sentence is uttered in reaction to an utterance U, then, if a meaning *feature* of any of the lexical items of U is rejected by the utterance of pAq, it is always taken to be less 'central' than or as 'central' as the meaning features accepted by it.

Consider the following examples:

(46) ze kadur, aval hu lo kofets tov.
(this is a ball, but it does not jump well)

(47) ?ze kadur, aval hu meruba.
(this is a ball, but it is square)

Here, (46) is acceptable without trouble, since there is a 'central' feature which is accepted while a less central one is cancelled: the property of being round is, in normal circumstances, more central to the concept 'ball' than that of jumping well. With (47), however, one wonders how, i.e., by means of what feature, can the object in question be identified as a ball, since one of the most central features (in normal circumstances) for such an identification (namely, roundness) is denied. Hence, (47) is less naturally acceptable than (46) — and perhaps altogether unacceptable.

'Aval' sentences of this type are very common in riddles:

(48) It's got legs but it does not walk.

(49) ?It can walk but it's got no legs.

As walking is only a specific use of legs, it is a less central feature of the purported 'object', and can be cancelled (48), while the property of having legs has to be assumed, i.e., cannot be cancelled, of something that is capable of walking (49).

As for 'ela', it can also operate on meaning features and the constraint on their equivalence of level (of centrality) is maintained in this case too:

(50) hakadur haze lo kofets ela mamash meraked.
(This ball does not jump but actually dances)

(51) ?hakadur haze lo kofets ela tsiv'oni.
(This ball does not jump but is colorful)[11]

In sum, 'aval' and 'ela' perform similar cancelation jobs whether they cancel out implicatures derived from factual or contextual knowledge or features of meaning proper, derived from dictionary entries.

9. More work needs to be done before the details of the framework we have outlined in this chapter are worked out, so that we get a better idea of the various layers that combine to produce the meaning of an utterance, their ordering, as well as of the sub-layers which make them up and their own internal ordering. Nevertheless, some further remarks and tentative conclusions are in order at this stage of the research.

Firstly, it should be stressed that we cannot account for the full range of uses of 'aval' and 'ela' without making reference to the whole spectrum of layers of meaning discussed in this chapter (and perhaps others we have not discussed), despite the fact that they are originally derived from different (if not rival) approaches to the analysis of utterance meaning (cf. the different approaches of Grice 1975 and Cohen 1971, for instance). We have tried to argue that a unified treatment of the empirical facts of pAq and pEq utterances requires a broader characterization of the notion of utterance meaning involving a variety of semantic and pragmatic notions. We have tried to structure them in terms of 'layers of meaning' and have indicated that such layers have a role to play in accounting for the uses of 'aval' and 'ela'.

Secondly, we believe that the intuitive notion of hierarchically ordered layers of meaning, and the directionality implied by our rule can both be independently motivated. Some of this motivation has to do with the analysis of conversation which can provide independent grounds for the layers of meaning hypothesis.[12] Finding independent motivation for our rule would

require, for example, an examination of the uses of additional 'particles' (e.g., 'lamrot' (although, in spite of), 'bexol zot' (nevertheless), afilu (even), etc.). This would enable one to see whether the framework here developed to account for the facts of 'aval' and 'ela' can be fruitfully applied to the study of other linguistic phenomena as well.

Let us just briefly take up the example of 'lamrot' (although):

(52) A: sgor et haxalon.
(Shut the window)
B: ani esgor oto, lamrot sheani lo rotse shetiten li pkudot.
(I'll shut it, although I don't want you to give me orders)
B: *ani esgor oto, lamrot sheal titen li pkudot
(I'll shut it, although don't give me orders)

Here, the tropic is cancelled, while the phrastic is accepted. We note, however, a constraint that is not shared by pAq sentences: the q conjunct must be in the indicative mood. Given regular stress and intonation, the reverse order is not acceptable:

C: *ani lo maskim shetiten li pkudot lamrot sheani esgor et haxalon.
(I refuse to receive orders from you although I will shut the window)

If 'lamrot' is heavily stressed in C, it will be interpreted as saying "I refuse to receive orders from you, although the fact that I shut the window may make it *look as if* I did", and this does not contradict the directionality assumed by our rule.

10. Finally, let us re-state the main conditions governing the uses of 'aval' and 'ela' discussed above, in terms of the framework outlined in this chapter:

a) *General*: both pAq and pEq utterances are to be primarily understood as reactive speech-acts, through which some canceling function relative to a prior utterance or its contextual equivalent is performed. (The layers of meaning referred to henceforth are those of this prior utterance or contextual equivalent.)

b) *pAq*

1. p and q refer to the same or to different layers of meaning.
2. p indicates acceptance of one layer or sub-layer and q indicates rejection of another, or vice versa.
3. The layer of meaning rejected in a pAq utterance is more 'external' or as 'external' as the one accepted in it.

c) *pEq*
1. p and q refer to the same layer of meaning.
2. p contains the denial of its focal element, and the focal element in q is believed by the speaker to be a replacement for the element denied in p.
3. p and q share a presupposition, in the form of an existentially quantified statement such that their focused elements both belong to the domain of the variable bound by their quantifiers; they are, in this way, structurally related.

Notes

1. We will use a self-explanatory, simplified phonetic notation for the Hebrew examples.

2. This is also true of exchanges like: "A: Moshe dayan iaxol li'hjot sar xuts metsuian. (Moshe Dayan can be an excellent foreign minister); B: hu lo iaxol, ela i'hje. (It's not that he can, but he will!)". In B's reply, one can say that the q conjunct contains — mainly through stress — an explicit 'actuality' (as opposed to mere 'possibility') modality.

3. We are not sure that felicity conditions should be viewed as a separate 'layer of meaning'. It seems more plausible to refer them to the illocutionary-force layer. Yet, the following examples deserve separate consideration.

4. (R) stands for "Be relevant!", a maxim which applies to one of the four 'categories' distinguished by Grice — Quantity, Quality, Relation and Manner — into which the various specific maxims derived from the Co-operative principle are classified (cf. Chapter 2). It seems that Grice's distinction between the four types of maxims can be reformulated in our framework in terms of a distinction of sub-layers within the layer of conversational implicature.

5. It is generally true that acceptance (or assent) can be implicitly indicated by a speaker, unlike rejection (or dissent). Thus, a pEq utterance indicates acceptance of all the layers of meaning which are 'internal' to the layer of meaning rejected by it in so many words.

6. The 'but' in the English sentence is invariably rendered as 'aval' in Hebrew.

7. Adjacency pairs exhibit the following features: 1. two utterance length; 2. adjacent positioning of component utterances; 3. different speakers producing the utterances; 4. relative ordering of parts (i.e., first pair parts precede second pair parts); and 5. discrimination relations (i.e., the pair type of which a first pair part is a member is relevant to the selection among second pair parts) (Schegloff and Sacks 1973: 295-6).

8. Most of the cases can be handled in terms of the stronger relation 'more external than'. Nevertheless, we had to weaken the rule, by employing the relation 'more external than or as external as' in order to account for some examples, particularly those falling under the label 'assertion and presupposition'.

9. If this type of procedure is indeed accepted, the fate of our rule will be similar to that of the demand that transformations preserve meaning, which started out as a working hypothesis based on linguistic facts, and became a criterion by which the adequacy of proposals for describing these facts was evaluated.

10. A similar argument can be made in terms of Searle's distinction between a 'referential act' and a 'predicational act', with the latter argued to be more internal than the former.

11. The English sentence is read as containing a 'but' that is equivalent to an 'aval'. Notice that, under special circumstances, (49) and (51) may be acceptable. Notice also that in (50) both predicates ('kofets' and 'meraked') share the same 'argumentative direction'. In such cases, it is more usual to insert a 'rak' (only) before the first predicate: "hakadur haze lo rak kofets, ela mamash meraked".

12. See Chapter 2 for details.

Chapter 7

Commitment and involvement

1

In the opening lines of *The Uses of Argument*, Toulmin (1958) says: "A man who makes an assertion puts forward a claim — a claim on our attention and to our belief". This formulation is hearer-oriented and, though mentioning one claim, distinguishes in fact two kinds of demands made upon the hearer by a speaker: those involving the hearer's attention and those involving his or her beliefs. Toulmin's remark could be generalized in several ways. Not only assertions make demand upon a hearer — any speech act does so. Attention is a 'claim' made by all speech acts, but each of them makes specific demands about the hearer's various psychological states. In a request, a hearer's willingness to act is acted upon; in a promise, his or her expectations; in an apology, his or her forgiveness, and so on. In all these cases the hearer may or may not ultimately modify his or her mental states (and actions) according to the speaker's wish. But if he or she 'engages' in the exchange, and 'understands' what is said, he or she is bound at least to identify the specifics of the claim put upon him or her.

The speaker, however, does not only make demands on the hearer but also makes 'promises' on his or her own part. One could say that when a person engages in a communicative exchange he or she makes two overall types of 'promise', which we will refer to as 'commitment' and 'involvement': the former is illustrated by a commitment to beliefs or other psychological states expressed by the utterance as well as to other elements of the illocutionary force such as its illocutionary point, or to indirectly conveyed meanings. It is also manifested in the adherence to rules regulating the procedural dimensions of the exchange (e.g., turn-taking) as well as its expressive dimension (captured in Goffman's notion of 'facework', i.e., speakers' adherence to the 'rule of considerateness', to an implicit agreement to maintain their own and each other's 'face').

The second type of 'promise' a speaker makes, the one we have termed 'involvement', relates to the speaker's mode of participation in the exchange.

This can range from very casual to very intense engagement, either in the topic of the exchange or in the relationship between the participants in it. This is a matter of degree, and one can speak, as does Tannen (1984), of a style of 'high involvement' as compared to a style of 'low involvement' and eventually study the formal features associated with different stylistic options along the 'involvement' dimension.

Both the notions of speaker's 'commitment' and of speaker's 'involvement' are central to the understanding of the speaker's contribution to a conversational exchange. These two concepts refer to two ways of relating to an exchange, and each can hinge upon any of its components. In particular, as our preliminary characterization indicates, it can hinge upon both the content and the relationship dimensions of the exchange.

We are aware of the fact that in ordinary discourse the conceptual distinction we are drawing between these two concepts is not clearly maintained. For example, in her study of the uses of the term 'commitment' in American discourse about marriage Quinn (1982) found that 'commitment' is used in three subordinate senses: *Promise, Dedication* and *Attachment*, which are related as different aspects of the interpersonal relationship of marriage. 'Commitment' is thus said to be a story "about a social institution, the speech act (*Promise*) that initiates it, and the entailments of this act: a state of intentionality (*Dedication*) and a relationship to another person (*Attachment*)" (778). Different occurrences of the word convey different senses of it. The sense of 'promise' is illustrated by the following example:

> I think the marriage commitment is slightly different and that it is a commitment to grow old together, leave children and, you know, intermix, and so forth (6H-2, 780).

The sense of 'dedication' is illustrated by:

> I would say it's a commitment to our marriage, a commitment to wanting to make our marriage work ... (4W-1, 781).

The sense of 'attachment' is exemplified by:

> He's someone that I've been able to get to a much deeper level with, the deepest of anyone that I know. But every relationship that I have is somewhere in the process. I feel very strongly — very committed to so many people (2W-5, 787).

Quinn (1982:784) argues that the distinct aspects of experience distinguished by the term 'commitment' go by the same name, rather than different names, because they are related. In our terminology, the 'promise' aspect of the term 'commitment' as used in American discourse about marriage would correspond to what we have referred to as the speaker's commitment, while its 'attachment' and its 'dedication' aspects would be comprehended by the notion of 'involvement'.

In this paper we will attempt to distinguish in a more precise way between the concepts of commitment and involvement by showing that they belong formally to two quite different kinds of concepts, namely 'absolute' and 'degree' concepts, respectively. We will show how they can be handled within a broad pragmatic account of spoken interaction, relating our analysis to sociological, anthropological, linguistic and philosophical treatments of these concepts. We will conclude by showing how these concepts, though different, stand in a complementary relation to each other. Our main concern will be with conceptual clarification rather than with the empirical investigation of these phenomena, though examples will be provided as we go along.

II

In linguistics and the philosophy of language the notion of commitment has been discussed extensively. We will briefly mention a few moves that have been made in the analysis of this notion as it relates to rules governing language use.

In the work of Hare (1970) and Lyons (1977) commitment (*neustic*) is seen as a feature of the illocutionary force of speech acts: if commitment is present, the act has one illocutionary force; if absent, another. For example, the two speech-acts of assertion and question containing the same propositional content ("Tel-Aviv is the largest city in Israel" vs. "Is Tel-Aviv the largest city in Israel?") are distinguished in that the first involves the speaker's commitment to the truth of the proposition while the second does not.

In Searle's and Vanderveken's recent versions of speech-act theory, illocutionary forces (which in fact define the different speech acts) are decomposed into seven constituents, which are claimed to be sufficient to define recursively the set of all possible illocutionary forces. Such components are the illocutionary point, its mode of achievement and degree of strength, its propo-

sitional content, preparatory and sincerity conditions, and the degree of strength of sincerity conditions. On this account, a speaker is fully committed to the seven values of the components that define the illocutionary force of his or her speech act. Any modification of these values amounts not to a less than 'full commitment' but to another illocutionary force, and hence amounts to the performance of another speech act. Yet, due to the two kinds of 'degrees of strength' introduced as components, different speech acts can be compared as to the 'strength' of the speaker's commitment they carry with them. Thus, "a speaker who commands makes a stronger attempt to get the hearer to do something than a speaker who requests" (Vanderveken 1985: 189) (degree of strength of the illocutionary point); and "the speaker who supplicates expresses a stronger desire than a speaker who requests" (191) (degree of strength of the sincerity condition). Though in both cases the illocutionary point is the same, the illocutionary force is different, given the different strength parameters, and the speaker is fully 'committed' to that force, in every case. It would be better to say, therefore, that these forces differ not in their 'degree of commitment' but rather in the degree of involvement of the speaker: the 'stronger' an illocutionary point, the more the speaker is 'involved' in achieving its aim; the stronger a sincerity condition, the more the speaker is 'involved' in expressing the relevant psychological state represented in that condition. According to this interpretation, degrees of involvement would be — to the extent that they are reflected in the two strength parameters discussed — inherent to illocutionary forces, so that by performing speech-acts with certain forces, the speaker would be ipso facto committed to certain forms of involvement (we pursue this idea below when discussing the dialectical relations between the two concepts).

There is another use of the notion of commitment in speech-act theory that should be mentioned: one of the five basic illocutionary points is the 'commissive' one, and it too can have different degrees of strength: "a speaker who swears that he will do something commits himself more to a future course of action than a speaker who accepts to do something" (Vanderveken 1985: 189). This special notion of commitment should not be conflated with the general notion of one's commitment to the whole of the illocutionary force (whether its point be commissive, assertive, directive, declarative, expressive), for one is fully committed to one's swearing just as to one's acceptance. Furthermore, its 'degrees of strength' are also, in fact, degrees of 'involve-

ment': someone who swears to do x is more 'involved' in doing x than one who merely accepts to do x.

Holmes (1984), somewhat similarly, introduces the notions of 'boosting' and 'attenuating' as two different strategies for modifying illocutionary force. They are conceived of as continuous, not dichotomous, features, which, contrary to Vanderveken's proposal, are external modifiers of the illocutionary force and not components of it. She draws a distinction between the speaker's modification of 'modal meaning', which has to do with his or her attitude to the content of the proposition, and the speaker's 'affective meaning', which has to do with the speaker's attitude to the addressee in the context of utterance. The modal meaning of an utterance involves the speaker's expressed degree of certainty as to the truth of the proposition asserted in it. A speaker may modify his or her commitment to the truth of a proposition by saying

(1) I'm not at all sure Mary is coming (attenuating), or

(2) Of course he's coming — there's no stopping him (boosting).

The speaker's affective meaning can also be modified in a number of ways: attenuation and boosting can each be used to modify positively and negatively affective speech-acts from any of the broad categories described by Searle (e.g., declaratives, expressives, etc.). Holmes provides a variety of examples, which illustrate the range of linguistic devices that can be used to boost or to attenuate the illocutionary force of various speech acts, e.g.,

(3) My God you are such a fool (boosting a negatively affective speech act).
(4) Really you are amazingly pretty (boosting a positively affective speech act).
(5) You are a bit of a fool you know (attenuating a negatively affective speech act).
(6) You are kind of pretty in a way (attenuating a positively affective speech act).

All these proposals have in common a concern with illocutionary force as the locus of commitment. But is indeed commitment exclusively a matter of illocutionary force? Another issue that is raised by these different approaches has to do with the questions of whether commitment is to be seen as a scalar phenomenon (as suggested by Vanderveken and Holmes) or as an all or none phenomenon (as suggested by Hare and Lyons). In the remainder of this

section we will attempt to substantiate the view mentioned earlier that commitment is an 'absolute' and not a 'degree' concept, as well as the view that commitment (or withdrawal thereof) is not exclusively a matter of the illocutionary force.

One can hedge (cf. Lakoff 1975) or ironize any layer of significance of an utterance, though this may be more readily accomplished in some cases than in others. The various forms of hedgings, or cancelations, we maintain, give rise to different kinds, but not to different degrees of commitment. Our approach rests on a broadly defined pragmatic framework we have proposed and applied in previous studies (cf. Katriel and Dascal 1984; see also Chapters 6 and 10) in which we have investigated pragmatic phenomena related to the speaker's commitment or involvement. In these studies we developed what we have dubbed the Onion Model of utterance-meaning. This model argues for a broad definition of the 'meaning' or 'significance' of an utterance, positing a hierarchical structure of 'layers of meaning', which jointly and differentially contribute to the overall significance of a conversational utterance, to what it actually conveys in a particular context. These 'layers' range from an inner 'core' of propositional content, through modality, illocutionary force and felicity conditions, up to an outer 'shell' of conversational implicatures.

The identification of these various 'layers' is empirically grounded by the discovery of linguistic mechanisms that work to separate them in some way, notably by canceling or foregrounding one layer or another. Thus, the partial cancelation of the potential meaning of an utterance through the use of 'but' (as in 'He is generous but poor') can be considered as an example of the withdrawal of commitment to some implied belief in a given context (e.g., the belief that he can make a substantial donation to our fund). Similarly, a subclass of Commitment Indicating Devices has been identified whose function it is to foreground — so as to either reinforce or to qualify — the speaker's commitment to aspects of his or her utterance (e.g., as in "I mean it, get lost!"). According to this, partial commitment is not a lesser degree of commitment to the same set of meanings, but rather commitment to a different, often reduced, set of meanings.

Notably, it emerges from the illustrations given so far that 'commitment' has to do with allegiance to some set of rules, which vary contextually, but some configuration of which is binding in any given situation. The conventional and formal nature of 'commitment' is brought out in two studies, which deal with this concept in two very different ways: Becker's (1960) sociological

theorizing on the nature of the concept of commitment and Quinn's (1982) aforementioned anthropological analysis of the uses of the term 'commitment' in American discourse about marriage.

In his search for a behavioral characterization of the concept of commitment, Becker comes up with the idea of side-bets as an indication of the existence of commitment. What characterizes his side-bet is that it is something that in and by itself has nothing to do with the object of commitment but is arbitrarily or conventionally linked to it with the sole purpose of proving, or bringing into existence, the agent's commitment. His attempt to characterize commitment in terms of the willingness to engage in side-bets amounts to the acknowledgement that commitment is a 'dispositional state' of the subject, a state that involves a norm or a rule to which the subject's behavior should conform. He illustrates this by a hypothetical example of bargaining:

> Suppose that you are bargaining to buy a house; you offer sixteen thousand dollars, but the seller insists on twenty thousand. Now suppose that you offer your antagonist in the bargaining certified proof that you have bet a third party five thousand dollars that you will not pay more than sixteen thousand for the house. Your opponent must admit defeat because you would lose money by raising your bid; you have committed yourself to pay no more than you originally offered (Becker 1960: 35).

This formal and conventional character of commitment relates to the relationship dimension as well. This is clearly brought out in the contractual nature of the ceremonial behaviors subsumed under Goffman's 'facework' analysis. He says, for example:

> A ceremonial rule is one which guides conduct in matters felt to have secondary or even no significance in their own right, having their primary importance - officially anyway - as a conventionalized means of communication by which the individual expresses his character or conveys appreciation of the other participants in the situation (Goffman 1967: 54).

As noted earlier, the conventional nature of 'commitment' is also found in one of the ordinary language uses of the term commitment ('promise') in American discourse about marriage. 'Promise' is the typical example of a 'commissive' speech act. But, as we have shown above, it cannot be confused with the overall, not less conventional, commitment of a speaker to all kinds of illocutionary forces.

The philosophical literature on 'commitment' tends to concentrate on the ethical, religious, and juridical uses of the term, and tends to stress the intimate relationship between commitment and responsibility, and the fact that the adoption of some commitment implies the acceptance of a system of obligations, more or less public in nature, whose non-fulfillment may, justifiably, lead to sanctions, or may be taken to signal the withdrawal of commitment. It is significant to observe that in this context too, commitment is viewed as closely linked, though not identical with involvement. "Any commitment" — writes Trigg (1973: 44) — "depends on two distinct elements. It presupposes certain beliefs and also involves a personal dedication to the actions implied by them. Each element can occur without the other, but if someone is truly committed, both elements will be present". He calls the second component the 'evaluative element' in commitment, and supports his claim by means of such examples as: "I cannot commit myself to something I believe to be utterly trivial or totally bad"; "Someone who devotes his life to a cause he does not believe in cannot be genuinely committed" (44-45). In our terms, however, 'full' or 'genuine' or 'true' commitment are in fact nothing but 'commitment cum involvement', and — as Trigg's examples in fact show — one can have the one without the other: one can be committed to trivialities such as saying truly what time it is, without being involved in it, and one can be involved in a cause without being formally or otherwise committed to it (i.e., without taking upon oneself a set of rules of conduct related to that cause).

The formal, conventional character of the notion of commitment supports our claim that commitment is an 'absolute', yes/no kind of concept. But it is, in fact, tempting to think that commitment is a matter of degree — e.g., in the case of side-bets one might think that the bigger the side-bet the bigger the commitment. Similarly, the fact that commitment can be differentially attached to different layers of significance might suggest that it is a matter of gradation, that one can be more or less committed to one's utterance rather than being fully committed to different aspects of it, as we would claim.

Stubbs acknowledges different types of commitment — lexical, propositional and illocutionary — in a way reminiscent of our claim that commitment applies (or not) to all the layers of significance of an utterance. He also argues, however, that commitment is a matter of degree, ranging from full commitment to complete detachment. As an example of full commitment he gives "the categorical assertion that p is the case" (Stubbs 1986: 10). This raises

many questions: e.g., what form would the assertion that p take? "p"? "p is the case"? "p is true"? "I assert that p"? Would all these be equivalent in commitment? And, as for p itself, would any of its paraphrases do? According to the general (functionalist) principle adopted by Stubbs (1986: 9) whereby a difference in form must involve a difference in meaning, any of these changes in wording should indicate changes in meaning, and, conceivably, differences in speaker-commitment. But then he would have to admit that only one of the above forms expresses full commitment, the rest expressing lesser degrees of commitment. Yet, any choice would be subject to contextual variation. While in some contexts the utterance "p" would qualify as an expression of full commitment, in others "I have told you many times that p" or some other form would be a better option. Furthermore, there may be contexts where different forms cannot be differentiated as to the degree of commitment they express, a fact that violates the functionalist principle. This seems to be either a reason to abandon this principle altogether (for other reasons, cf. Dascal 1983) or else to question the alleged existence of an unlimited number of 'degrees' of commitment.

Stubbs acknowledges definitional difficulties with respect to the notion of complete detachment, saying that "the extreme end point of the detachment scale is elusive" and he settles for "some kind of quotation or mention" and for the very different case of the attitude of "entertaining a proposition for the sake of argument" (10). It seems to us that these difficulties are not accidental, and, moreover, that similar considerations apply to the apparently less problematic issue of 'complete commitment'. First of all, there can be no 'complete detachment' because that would simply amount to not saying p. Even in denying p, one assumes that others may have grounds for asserting p, grounds that are worth considering and hence denying. Detachment presupposes the dissociation of layers of significance, and a differential attitude towards such layers. Hence the elusiveness of 'complete detachment': where there is no such dissociation, where the utterance is accepted en bloc, there, one might think, lies 'complete commitment'. But, we would like to suggest, this 'extreme' of the alleged continuum is no less elusive than its counterpart. Commitment is, in a sense, always complete because it is always — much like detachment — differential.

In order to substantiate this claim, we will show: (a) that the alleged cases of 'full commitment' can be seen, in a broader context, as cases of partial

commitment; and (b) that the cases of 'weak' or 'partial' commitment can be seen, in a narrower context, as cases of 'full' commitment.

The notions of broad and narrow 'contexts' should have suggested to the reader the main line of the argument. Suppose someone 'categorically asserts' "p". Is he 'fully committed' to (the truth of) p? The answer, of course, is "it depends". If he has been asked "p?", then maybe yes (but, why repeat in his answer "p", rather than just saying "yes"? Would these two alternatives represent different degrees of commitment?). But if he has been asked, say, "are you sure that p?", then the answer is probably "no"! It could perhaps be said that in the latter case the utterance "p" cannot be viewed as a 'categorical assertion' anymore. The general fact remains, however, that 'assertion' may well be the highest point in one hierarchy (e.g., the one including, say, reporting, saying, suggesting, hinting, claiming, assuming, etc.), while at the same time it occupies a rather low position in another hierarchy (e.g., that including being sure, knowing for certain, knowing, having the best possible evidence to the effect that, believing, thinking, etc.). Since the (sincere) assertion of p presumably only implies the belief that p, it cannot rise higher than belief in the epistemic hierarchy. Now, by the principle that regulates the implicatures of quantity, the 'mere' assertion of p, if placed in the context of this hierarchy, implicates that the speaker is less than fully committed to (the truth of) p.

Using the same example, we can now turn to (b), and try to show that cases of 'partial' commitment can, in a narrower context, be seen as cases of 'full commitment'. In this case, though not committed to knowing p, the speaker, who (sincerely, etc.) asserts "p", is committed to believing that p — and this belief he is "fully" committed to. If he hedges his assertion in certain ways, it is not that he is still committed to believing that p, though in a "weaker" way. He simply is no longer committed to this belief at all, though he may still be committed to other mental attitudes regarding p, or to beliefs other than the belief that p. For instance, by (sincerely) reporting that "p" was uttered by a given source S, the speaker is committed to the belief that S uttered "p", as well as, say, to expressing his mental state of entertaining p. He is fully, and not weakly or partially, committed to both, and what he detaches himself from — also fully — is the possible significance, attached to his utterance, that he also believes that p. Similarly, with promises. Stubbs (1986: 8) discusses the difference between a promise containing an explicit performative ("I promise I'll go tomorrow") and one that does not ("I'll go tomorrow"), saying, on the one hand that "both can be promises, since both

can commit the speaker" and, on the other, that they are not equivalent since the latter "could have vague or indeterminate force: it could be a predication, a suggestion, a warning or some combination of these". Our point is that whatever the illocutionary force the utterance is interpreted to have, in a given context — be it promising, predicting, suggesting or whatever — the speaker will be heard to be fully, and not partially committed to it.

In sum, commitment, like knowledge and flatness, is an absolute concept. Either one is committed or not, either one knows that p or not, either a surface is flat or not. There are no degrees in these matters, just as there is no 'degree' in being pregnant. What sometimes causes confusion is that the standards vary in different contexts. A surface that is flat, say, for the purpose of planning your driving strategy in a Grand Prix, turns out to be rather like a rugged cordillera if you intend to use it as a drawing table. Flatness is judged by reference to certain standards, which can vary in different contexts. But, given some standard, a surface is either flat or not. In this, 'flat' is unlike inherently comparative adjectives such as 'good', 'high', 'big', etc. Dretske (1981a) has argued that 'knowledge' belongs to this class of 'absolute concepts', which have a 'pragmatic' dimension in that the standards of application can vary with context. We suggest that 'commitment' is another member of this family. 'Involvement', on the other hand, is not an absolute concept, but rather a genuine degree-concept, as we shall try to show presently.

III

We propose to distinguish between two general types of speaker involvement. Both relate to the speaker's attentional orientation. We will call the first type, which refers to the speaker's cognitive orientation to a shared discourse topic, 'topical involvement' and the second type, which refers to the speaker's orientation to the speech situation and the participants in it, 'interactional involvement'.

III.1 Topical involvement

The usefulness of the notion of topical involvement has been illustrated with reference to the phenomenon of conversational digressions (Chapter 10). In that study we tried to account for different types of conversational digressions

by utilizing Schutz's (1970) notion of the 'field of consciousness', which is structured in terms of center and horizon. In particular, we were concerned with perceived differences in the degree of 'digressionality' of various utterances which depart from the mainstream conversational topic in one way or another. Thus, material that is topically relevant at the time of utterance can be said to occupy the center of the speaker's 'field of consciousness' while other material can be either relegated to its horizons, or occupy some position in-between, or be dropped out altogether (cf. Chafe 1974 and Goffman 1983, for a related discussion).

Although both 'commitment' and 'topical involvement' describe cognitive phenomena, they are different in nature: 'commitment' refers to what the speaker can be said to have 'taken for granted' in making his or her utterance; 'topical involvement', on the other hand, refers to that which occupies a central position in the speaker's field of consciousness at the time of talk. While the former is an all or none matter, the latter may genuinely involve degrees, as far as 'center vs. periphery' is obviously not a strict dichotomy, but only a convenient way of designating the polar regions in a scalar field. Both the differences and the relatedness of these two notions can be brought out by considering how they work with reference to some notions that have been a traditional concern in pragmatic studies.

The notion of topical involvement can, we believe, be incorporated into a pragmatic account in such a way as to account for the intuitions that have (probably) led Stubbs (1986) to posit, and distinguish between, the notions of 'degree of commitment' and 'manner of commitment'. The account we offer preserves the nature of involvement as a 'degree-concept' and seems to us to resolve some puzzles related to the notion of commitment.

Stubbs notes that a speaker is committed to the same degree to a proposition p whether p is asserted or presupposed: both '(I assert that) p' and 'I realize that p' convey full commitment to p. However, he argues that the manner of commitment is different in each case. It seems to us that these and related differences, between making an assertion, holding a presupposition, producing an implicature and entertaining a proposition, can be accounted for in terms of the more generalized distinction between 'commitment' and 'topical involvement'. With reference to the above acts, we submit, one can say:

1. When a proposition is asserted the speaker:
   (a) commits himself or herself to its truth, and (b) holds that proposition at the center of his or her field of consciousness.
2. When a proposition is presupposed by an assertion, the speaker:
   (a) commits him/herself to its truth, and (b) holds the proposition at the horizon of his or her field of consciousness.
3. When a proposition is implicated by an assertion a speaker makes as part of a conversational exchange:
   (a) the speaker does not fully commit him/herself to its truth, and
   (b) both the proposition implicated and the one asserted are held at the center of the speaker's field of consciousness.
4. When a proposition in entertained (e.g., for the sake of argument), then
   (a) the speaker is not at all committed to its truth, and (b) the proposition entertained is at the center of the speaker's field of consciousness.

The differences between asserted, presupposed, implicated or entertained propositions can thus be traced both to the speaker's commitment to the truth of the utterance and to the place the proposition expressed by it can be said to occupy in the speaker's 'field of consciousness'. These are, indeed, two separate issues and should be clearly distinguished rather than being both subsumed under the label 'commitment'. In every communicative exchange speakers have to co-ordinate both their shared beliefs and assumptions about the world and their attentional orientations to the elements which form part of their respective fields of consciousness. Nothing short of such coordination can result in the linguistic accomplishment of a smoothly flowing conversation.

III.2 Interactional involvement

Conversations, however, are social, not only cognitive events, and, as such, they require that the speaker orient himself or herself to the topic at hand and to the participants in the exchange in such a way as to display as well as to generate a proper degree of involvement. We have dubbed this aspect of the speaker's involvement as 'interactional involvement'.

The consideration of interactional involvement takes us into the area of overlap between pragmatics and microsociology. In a posthumously pub-

lished paper, Goffman (1983) explored this shared domain, mainly drawing sociologists' attention to the insights gained by research in pragmatics. As he took pragmatic studies of language as his starting point, his treatment was generally more attuned to cognitive issues relating to topical involvement than to the kind of issues that, in our terminology, fall under the label 'interactional involvement'. We believe a complementary move, which would seek to incorporate the notion of involvement and the observed involvement displays into a pragmatic framework in an explicit way is warranted. Goffman's (1971) earlier work on the issue of involvement contains many insights which are of considerable interest to pragmatic research. This work, as well as some recent work by sociolinguists, notably Gumperz (1982), Kochman (1981) and Tannen (1984), indicates that involvement displays are an important aspect of spoken interaction. This aspect of discursive conduct is particularly intriguing because it spans both verbal and nonverbal phenomena.

The speaker's degree of involvement in the speech situation can be signaled by a variety of verbal means including lexical choice and syntactic construction. It can also be signaled by a variety of nonverbal means: volume and pitch, gesture and posture, eye contact, and so on. In any given speech situation, within a given cultural context, the speaker's employment of a particular configuration of involvement indicators is interpreted as, and in turn defines, a particular level of involvement.

Chafe (1982) discusses the involvement/detachment continuum in relation to differences between spoken vs. written discourse. He details specific devices which reveal the feature of involvement. These include: first person references, references to speaker's mental processes ('I think'), monitoring information flow, emphatic particles (e.g., 'just', 'really'), fuzziness, vagueness, hedges, direct quotes. Tannen has further elaborated this work and her book on conversational style (1984: 30-31) contains the following summary characterization of what she calls 'high involvement style', one of the poles in the involvement/detachment continuum:

1. Topic
   a. Prefer personal topics
   b. Shift topic abruptly
   c. Introduce topics without hesitance
   d. Persistence (if a new topic is not immediately picked up, reintroduce it, repeatedly if necessary)

2. Pacing
    a. Faster rate of speech
    b. Faster turn taking
    c. Avoid inter-turn pauses (silence shows lack of rapport)
    d. Cooperative overlap
    e. Participatory listenership
3. Narrative strategies
    a. Tell more stories
    b. Tell stories in rounds
    c. Prefer internal evaluation (i.e., point of a story is dramatized rather than lexicalized)
4. Expressive paralinguistics
    a. Expressive phonology
    b. Marked pitch and amplitude shifts
    c. Marked voice quality
    d. Strategic within-turn pauses

Within the involvement/detachment continuum, involvement displays are culturally constrained, as is suggested by Tannen's studies of Greek American discourse as well as by Kochman's studies of Black American communicative style. The communicative repertoire of every speech community defines a range of behaviors that can be drawn upon by members to display (and generate) the degree of involvement they deem appropriate in given situations. The actual social meaning conveyed by the display of a particular involvement or detachment level may vary in different situations. It may convey a desire to generate identification, to indicate aloofness, or to deal effectively with a sensitive issue, for example. The rhetorical function that the manipulation of this dimension of discourse can serve is revealed in Roeh's (1982) study of the language of news broadcasting on Israeli radio. The discourse genre employed in this media context is marked by a 'low-involvement', detached style. Roeh refers to this as a 'rhetoric of objectivity' whose function is to present the news as 'facts' (blurring the selective and compositional processes that went into the message construction) and argues that its societal function is to promote conformity to the status quo. Indicators of speaker-involvement are kept out as much as possible both from the language in which the news broadcast is couched and from the manner of delivery as they suggest 'subjectivity', hence, lack of credibility.

The display of interactional involvement is usually a behaviorally complex phenomenon, combining indicators related to a number of communication channels. At times, much of the burden of the display can rest with the language used. One such pragmatically sensitive domain of linguistic expression can be found in the use of pronouns (cf. Varenne 1984, on the pragmatics of pronominal usage). This linguistic possibility can be illustrated with two examples taken from two different chapters in a book by Amos Oz (1983). This book gives a series of impressionistic accounts of various problematic aspects of Israeli life in the form of interviews with the persons involved, both Arabs and Jews. Of the two examples we will cite, one illustrates the use of pronouns to signal relative detachment and the other illustrates how the speaker's involvement can be intensified through the speaker's pronominal choice (the citations given below are our own translations of the Hebrew original).

The first example relates to a guarded exchange between the author and a number of Arab men in the West Bank. Discussing issues that are well-nigh explosive in Arab-Jewish relations, the first young Arab speakers pointedly indicate their detachment from the speech situation (i.e., both from the topic at hand and their interlocutor) by systematically using the third person plural form. Oz (1983:63): "I notice that Hassan and Naif take great care to stick to the third person: 'They'll fight, they'll die, they'll get tired of it'. They take the utmost care not to use 'we' and 'you'". The author follows suit, synchronizing his involvement display with that of the young Arabs. At the end of the conversation, however, the old Arab man who had been silent all along changes the whole tone of the encounter as he "casually breaks the grammatical agreement to always use third person plural" (68), and offers a personalized account in the language of 'we' and 'you'.

The second example is an account of a powerful monologue by a Jewish Israeli farmer-fighter who expounds his extreme right wing, nationalistic views to the author, who is a well-known left wing figure. This monologue is highly personalized and is replete with first person pronouns, which indicate the speaker's involvement in his topic as well as in the speech situation. Notably, the speaker goes beyond the self-expansive use of the first person plural that is so typical of Israeli discourse on public affairs (e.g., "The war we are now fighting in Lebanon") to the use of the first person singular in such contexts. For example, talking about the powerful countries in the world, he says (72):

> I want to see Israel in this club ... Perhaps finally the world will start fearing me instead of pitying me. Perhaps they'll start fearing my crazes rather than admiring my 'beautiful souls' ... Let them tremble, let them call me a crazy state.

This use of the first person pronoun seems to us to indicate a high degree of involvement of the speaker both in the topic and in his speaker-role.

We see, then, that pronominal choice can be used, together with other indicators, to signal the speaker's degree of involvement: the use of the third person, in some discursive contexts, has a depersonalizing, distancing effect, while the use of the first person in other contexts can serve to create a sense of involvement in the topic and in the situation of talk to various degrees of intensity.

IV

What emerges from our discussion is that while the speaker's commitment is a matter of kind, the speaker's involvement is a matter of degree. Thus, side-involvements, e.g., lighting a cigarette while talking, or skimming the headlines of a newspaper while listening, affect the interactants' degree of involvement and not its kind. Side-involvements are tolerated insofar as they are not 'too much'.

Furthermore, unlike commitment, which is defined by a set of binding rules, involvement is not a social but a mental state and, as such, it is not rule-governed, if we follow Shimanoff's (1980: 50) suggestion that the proper domain of rules is behavior, not mental states. Both the differences and the interrelationships between commitment and involvement in this respect should be, however, taken into account. For instance, in employing certain words one is thereby committed to the meanings standardly expressed by these words, even if one's intention is ultimately to convey something else. But, at the same time, one is free to employ or not to employ that word, as one is free to talk or not to talk about a given topic, to be interested or not to be interested in something, etc. Similarly, by choosing to talk about a given topic, in a given way, one displays a certain level of involvement, which entails certain commitments.

Insofar as there is a conventional element in involvement, this element has to do with the link between involvement and commitment. Every level of involvement is defined by the cluster of commitments that it entails. For instance, with a shift to a higher degree of interpersonal involvement, speakers may decide to drop the use of titles, greater leeway can be given to the introduction of digressive material, and so on. One should not infer, however, that a higher degree of involvement necessarily entails fewer commitments. Rather, it entails a different configuration of them. Thus, the dropping of titles is likely to be accompanied by more intense postural cues indicating intensified involvement; or, in writing a semi-business letter, the adoption of a personalized tone seems to require some reference to personal matters (inquiry about health, regards to family, etc.). Shifts in the use of commitment Indicating Devices serve to indicate changes in degree of involvement. In fact, it appears that up to a certain level of interpersonal distance the speaker's commitment to various discursive rules serves to display appropriate degrees of involvement. In the context of intimate relationships, however, there is a general relaxation in the speaker's adherence to many of these rules, as involvement can be taken for granted.

Another way of putting it is to say that the speaker's degree of involvement determines the 'game' to be played, while rules of commitment are moves within the game. Analogously, the hearer faces two quite distinct tasks: that of 'grasping' the appropriate kind of interpretation to be sought, and that of actually interpreting or 'comprehending' what is said according to the appropriate rules (Chapter 4). The state of the game can only be discovered through changes within it; degree of involvement can only be discerned by noting changes in the speaker's commitments. This also seems to explain the tendency to talk of degrees of commitment: while commitment is not a matter of degree, the configurations which make up speakers' commitments yield different degrees of involvement.

The close relationship between these two concepts also accounts for the fact that they are often confused for each other. Throughout this paper we tried to argue that these concepts should be clearly demarcated from each other. We will conclude by showing how this conceptual clarification can contribute to our understanding of the concept of 'speaker' itself, a concept that is fundamental to any pragmatic theory of discourse. Goffman (1981) proposes that the notion of 'speaker' be deconstructed into three analytically

distinct elements, to which we will refer as 'speaker-roles'. These may or may not combine in any instance of speaking:

1. *The animator role*, which involves the actual production of speech sounds.
2. *The author role*, which involves the selection and encoding of the message.
3. *The principal role*, which implies the discursive construction identity and a commitment to "what the words say" (144).

The term 'speaker' as it is ordinarily used with reference to face-to-face interaction implies that the individual who animates is also formulating his own text and staking out his own position through it: animator, author and principal are one. But this is not always the case. To use Goffman's own examples,

> reciting a fully memorized text or reading aloud from a prepared script allows us to animate words we had no hand in formulating, and to express opinions, beliefs and sentiments we do not hold. We can openly speak for someone else and in someone else's words, as we do, say, in reading a deposition or providing a simultaneous translation of a speech - the latter an interesting example because so often the original speaker's words, although ones that person commits himself to, are ones that someone else wrote for him (1981:146-147).

Goffman specifically associates the notion of commitment with the role of principal — the social dimension of the speaker. He does not, however, attempt a systematic account of the kinds of commitments a speaker makes nor does he explore their relationships to speaker-roles. As Stubbs (1986) points out, Goffman's distinction between the roles of principal and author is not quite clear. Indeed, we believe that the notion of commitment cannot fully capture the difference between these three speaker roles. This would require both the notions of commitment and involvement. Thus, clearly, a speaker speaking in a principal-role is both involved in the exchange and committed to the expressed contents and illocutionary forces. A speaker speaking in an animator-, but not in an author- or principal-role, is not committed to the meanings his or her utterances convey, and may or may not be involved in the content of what he or she says, but is nevertheless committed to social rules of engagement and is interactionally involved with the interlocutor(s) to the degree that the speech situation requires. As for author-role, insofar as it is associated both with the selection of the message and with its form of encod-

ing, commitment to what is said as well as some degree of involvement in the topic seem to be implied. The author-role does not imply commitment to social rules of spoken engagement or display of interpersonal involvement with one's interlocutors. It seems, then, that the distinctions we have drawn can, among other things, help to further clarify the notion of 'speaker' in such a way as to take into account the broad range of communicative roles which speakers actually perform.

Chapter 8

Cues, clues, and context

A. Interpretation clues and text understanding: An integrated model

In recent years it has been widely accepted that 'context' plays a central role in the interpretation of both speech and written texts. It is generally assumed that the addressee is exposed to a linguistic 'base' — sometimes referred to as 'literal meaning' — from which he reaches out to accomplish his interpretation, by using and manipulating both cotext and context. Yet, opinions differ extensively as to the weight of contextual vs. cotextual material, as to the nature of the factors involved and as to how these factors interact in order to lead to an integrated output. There is also divergence of opinion regarding the precise nature, extent, and role of the linguistic 'base' that allegedly triggers the process of interpretation, as well as some questioning of its very existence as an invariant factor (see Chapter 25).

Three inter-related questions can be raised in this connection:

(a) Does the mere presence of the same linguistic expressions in different utterances or texts mean that the addressee is in fact exposed to the same 'literal meaning' on these different occasions?

(b) What types of clues does the addressee employ in order to get from this literal meaning — whatever it is — to his final interpretation?

(c) How do these clues guide the addressee into the maze of contextual and cotextual information available to him, and how can this maze possibly be organized or structured?

In this paper we wish to address mainly the second and third issues. We shall propose a model which accounts for the various types and level of contextual information employed by the reader of a written text in order to interpret it. Roughly, the model attempts a precise characterization of two types of contex-

tual information, namely extra-linguistic and meta-linguistic. It then distinguishes, within these types, three distinct levels of information, ranging from specific, through conventional ('shallow') to general ('background') knowledge of facts, principles, etc. We illustrate these notions by applying the model to the interpretation of a journalistic written text.

1. Sample cases

Consider the following sentence:

(1) John is a tall guy.

As has been previously pointed out (Searle 1979a: 79-80; Dascal 1983: 26), the adjective *tall,* being a comparative term, contains as part of its semantic value the notion of relativity. Sentence (1) can therefore be reformulated as follows:

(1a) John is taller than a certain average height X.

Consequently, its utterance meaning[1] might vary according to the various possible values of X, depending on whether the sentence is uttered in an ordinary everyday situation (in Western countries) in which the average height of people is approximately 1.70 meters, or if it is uttered in the context of a discussion on basketball where the average height of players is approximately 1.90 meters. While in the latter case the utterance meaning of (1) would probably be as in (1c), in the former it would be as in (1b):

(1b) John is about 1.80 meters tall.

(1c) John is about 2 meters tall.

The interpretation of the utterance in this case, then, requires reliance upon such contextual clues as the identification of the relevant comparison group (basketball players vs. ordinary people), and some acquaintance with its relevant features (i.e., average height).

Obviously, one might imagine a situation in which this procedure is not required, and a shortcut is taken. If, for example, the addressee takes utterance (1) to refer to John Stuart, with whom he is acquainted and whose height he knows, he may interpret the utterance simply by employing his 'contextual' knowledge of John Stuart.

It is therefore possible to interpret the same utterance by means of at least two distinct procedures: in one case, through the interpretation of the comparative *tall* by the application of one's standard knowledge of a given,

culture-dependent situation; in the other, by the application of one's possession of specific information. In both cases, however, the final interpretation draws heavily on the manipulation of extra-linguistic clues, i.e., contextual clues involving the addressee's acquaintance with the situation of utterance. This, of course, is even more obvious when the utterance contains deictic expressions. The point to be emphasized here is that, although the need for contextual clues in the interpretation of nonindexical expressions is not indicated by the semantic nature of the sentence components, their role is of no lesser importance.

Contextual clues, however, are not always "purely" extra-linguistic. Consider the use of the verb *claim* in examples (2) and (3):

(2) One would never have reason, Davidson claims, to accept G as *strictly* true and projectable. It would always remain possible to discover a person whose behavior. … And if one could never have reason to accept G as strictly true and projectable, then G cannot be a law (Loar 1981: 20).

(3) He claims that he is faithful to you.

In both instances, by using the verb *claim*, the speaker implicitly qualifies the reported clause that follows it as a statement which calls for further supporting evidence. However, in example (3), which is typically colloquial, the reported clause is qualified as extremely implausible in the speaker's opinion (suggesting that he might have said, e.g., *He claims that he is faithful to you, but of course he is not*); whereas in example (2), used in a theoretical text (in the Humanities), the reported clause is considered by the writer as being not only potentially provable, since he suggests the proof ("It would always remain possible..."), but also as entirely acceptable, since he proceeds to use the claim in order to prove something else ("And if one could never have reason..."). The difference in nuance is even more apparent when comparing (4) with (5) and (6):

(4) Marxist scholars have made this admission with respect to other historical periods. G.A. Cohen claims that historical materialism cannot explain 'the endless nuances' of precapitalist class history — the various forms of social organization in precapitalist clan society. All that historical materialism explains of this epoch, is that where society is capable of producing some surplus, sonic form of precapitalist clan society will ensue; and that when the surplus becomes moderately high, capitalism will ensue. Between so-called *Asiatic* forms and feudalism, however, historical materialism cannot distinguish (see Cohen 1978: 200) (Roemer 1982: 6n).

(5) He claims to be your friend.

(6) He claims to be the King of France.

Just as in (3), in (5) and (6) the verb *claim* conveys the speaker's feeling that the reported utterance is implausible, whereas in (4), the claim is further explained and clarified, and in no way is it treated as an implausible or unacceptable one.[2]

One way of accounting for this difference is by saying that the verb *claim* can be situated within two distinct paradigmatic hierarchies of semantically related items, acquiring its meaning by virtue of its position in the appropriate hierarchy. In its written use, as in (2) and (4), the verb is conceived as belonging to a paradigm consisting of such expressions as *conjecture*, *assume*, *claim*, *argue*, etc. The distinctive feature relevant for the interpretation of the members of the paradigm being a 'degree of decisiveness' or 'degree of assertiveness', *he claims* is interpreted as implying a smaller degree of decisiveness and assertiveness than *he argues*, and a higher degree than *he conjectures*. Note that in this paradigm the degree of plausibility does not seem to be a distinctive feature.

In its everyday use, on the other hand, the verb *claim* is conceived as part of a paradigm consisting of the various structures employed in direct and indirect reports of utterances, namely:

S says: "p".
S says that p.
S claims that p.
S says that "p".
S claims that "p".

While the first structure is marked for reliability of the speaker and for exactitude of the quotation "p", and the second for the speaker's mediation or 'censorship', the three remaining structures imply different degrees of the speaker's reservation towards the content of the reported statement or towards its form, the last one being the most reserved.[3] Conceived as part of this hierarchy, the structure in examples (3), (5), and (6) (i.e., *claim* + an indirectly reported utterance) is marked for a moderate degree of speaker's reservation towards the reported statement.

Thus interpretation may be said to depend on the selection of the paradigmatic hierarchy relevant for a given instance, a selection for which the addressee must have some guidance from clues provided by the cotext or by the

context. In our case, the selection of the relevant paradigm could be guided by the addressee's acquaintance with differences in register conventions (written and formal in (2), (4) vs. oral and colloquial in (3), (5), (6)). In any case, the interpretation involves the manipulation of clues of various types, drawing not only on the addressee's knowledge of the world, but also on the "activation" of his knowledge of linguistic functions and conventions. In order to account for how one copes with this variety of clue types, we shall postulate a model schematically presented in figure 1, and discussed in the next section.[4]

2. Contextual clues

The model sketched in figure 1 is designed to account for the large 'reservoir' of clues which may, on different occasions, be at the disposal of the addressee, and out of which he should select the clues most relevant to the specific utterance, the specific situation and the specific background knowledge.[5]

The model makes the following assumptions:

(i) In his search for speaker's meaning, the addressee might be guided by two *types* of contextual clues: extra-linguistic and meta-linguistic. Roughly, extra-linguistic clues lead to the addressee's knowledge of the world, while meta-linguistic clues have to do with his knowledge of linguistic structures and conventions. It should be emphasized that by 'knowledge' we do not necessarily mean an explicitly established conscious type of knowledge, but rather 'folk knowledge', which may be tacit.

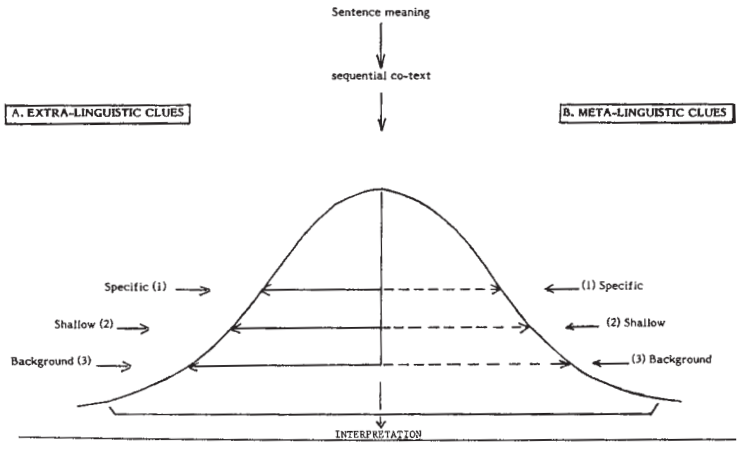


Figure 1: Contextual clues employed for the interpretation of utterances

(ii) Within each *type* of clues, three distinct *levels* are postulated, ranging from specific, 'immediate' knowledge of the circumstances of utterance, through assumptions about conventional properties, to general, background knowledge of facts, principles, etc.
(iii) A parallelism of levels of specificity is postulated between the two clue types.
(iv) The exploitation of contextual clues of both types is achieved through a two-step process consisting of the primary *valuation* of immediate features, and their later *evaluation*. Valuation involves identifying structures and assigning values to them. Evaluation involves checking the valuated structures against background assumptions and knowledge, and looking for their functions.
(v) A further parallelism between the two types of clues, regarding the two-fold process of valuation and evaluation, is claimed to obtain.

Based on the above principles, the model lays out the following sources for contextual clues:

(A1) *Extra-linguistic specific context*: specific features of the situation referred to in the text.

For example, if the text refers to John's lunch at 'La Belle', the interpretation draws on the addressee's acquaintance with John's eating habits in general (such as his avoidance of sea-food, his fancy for certain drinks, etc.), with the prestigious character of 'La Belle', the expected price of the meal, and so on. In other words, the addressee is required to select those situational features which, although not explicitly referred to in the text, might be relevant for its interpretation. Clearly, the fact that John eats at 'La Belle' will have a special claim on the addressee's attention if he happens to know that John is very poor and 'La Belle' is a very expensive restaurant. On the other hand, given the extra-linguistic fact that John is a famous interior decorator, a special meaning may be assigned to the fact that 'La Belle' is known for its exclusive decor. In all these instances, the extra-linguistic clues have to do with the addressee's acquaintance with specific situational features related to the text.

(B1) *Meta-linguistic specific context*: specific features of the linguistic circumstances relevant to the utterance in question.

For example, the valuation of a given use as typically associated with the idiolect of a well-known person or with a literary source, and draws on the addressee's acquaintance with these linguistic features.

(A2) *Extra-linguistic 'shallow' context*: general assumptions about the features of a given set of situations.

For example, having valuated the essential specific components of the John's-lunch-at-La-Belle situation, the interpretation of the text requires some knowledge of the conventional features of a restaurant situation, i.e., some acquaintance with the way people *usually* behave when eating at restaurants and, more particularly, the way they usually behave in elegant and expensive ones, etc. Roughly, the notion of shallow context has to do with the acquaintance with what is variously called in the literature 'frames', 'scripts' or 'schemata' (Goffman 1974; Schank and Abelson 1977; van Dijk 1977a). It differs from the immediate, specific context by its stereotyped culture-dependent character.
(B2) *Meta-linguistic 'shallow' context*: general assumptions about the conventional structure of a text designed for a specific purpose; assumptions about register-dependent conventions and specific postulates usually employed in a given register.

For example, having valuated a text as typically fictional, the addressee would probably expect it to be subjected to pragmatic rules different from those governing informative discourse (Searle 1979a); or, having valuated a text as typically belonging to the register of technical written English, he would probably interpret the differentiation between past tense and present tense in paragraphs devoted to the description of a gadget as marking (implicitly) the difference between types of gadgets (Lackstrom, Selinker and Trimble 1973); or reading a journalistic text, he would probably expect the reporter's attitude toward the subject matter to be conveyed in certain ways (Weizman 1984, 1986). The main reason for the addressee's expectations in these cases lies in his folk notion of a stereotyped structure of the register in question. Naturally, he is not supposed to be aware of this notion, and although it is essential for any interpretation, chances are that it acquires a special value only if it is contradicted. Thus, in a journalistic text, a non-conventional redundancy or explicitness in the way the reporter conveys his attitude may be interpreted as having a special speaker's meaning, or as suggesting that the text has been translated.[6]

(A3) *Extra-linguistic background knowledge*: general knowledge about the world.

For example, the knowledge that people exist, that people eat for survival and/or pleasure, that their digestive organs comprise the oral cavity, the stomach, the intestines, etc. Again, this type of underlying knowledge acquires special value only if it is contradicted or otherwise highlighted. For example, if it turns out that for some physiological reason John is usually unable to use his mouth for eating, then the fact that he has used it under specific circumstances can indicate that he purchased some kind of mechanical aid or that his disease had been successfully treated.

(B3) *Meta-linguistic background knowledge*: general knowledge about the functioning of verbal communication.

For example, the knowledge required for the (passive) comprehension and for the (active) use of a specific language, the folk knowledge of the maxims of communication, etc. This type of knowledge too turns out to be of special value for interpretation under special circumstances, as, for example, when a Gricean maxim is deliberately violated.

The typology here presented calls for some remarks:

(I) It is not claimed that the contextual clues here described are manipulated in any linear order, nor is it suggested that they constitute disjoint sets, mutually exclusive. Rather, we think of them as clusters of different types, combined in various ways, depending on the circumstances of utterance. Hence their presentation in figure 1 by means of a bell-shaped curve.

(II) Although generally speaking the goal to be achieved by the addressee is always to determine the speaker's meaning, various paths may lead towards this goal. This point will be illustrated in section 3.

(III) The primary valuation of the essential situational and linguistic features relevant to the text, based on specific clues (of types A1 + B1), provides the addressee with some initial picture of the 'meaning' of the text which we would like to call its 'working profile'. This might eventually turn out to be the closest one can get to an equivalent, for texts, of the notion of literal meaning. This profile cannot be further interpreted unless it is checked and evaluated against the addressee's assumptions about conventional features (A2 + B2) and his background knowledge (A3 + B3).

3. Towards the analysis of a journalistic text

In order to illustrate the typology presented above and the principle of interpretation coupled with it, we have chosen to discuss some aspects of the interpretation of the following journalistic text, translated from Hebrew (the numbering of the passages is our own).

(A) It is interesting to know: Who was responsible for Israel's economy in the years 1981-1983? Who was the Minister of Finances in those fateful years, during which the economic policy of color T.V. sets was carried out, during which inflation got out of bounds and became crazy, during which the balance of payments became so negative that the country came to the verge of international bankruptcy, during which the banks crashed and the savings of thousands of innocent citizens were robbed — who was the man? And where does he hide from shame? Did he convert to Christianism and migrate to Brazil? Or did he change his name and identity and works as a barman at Raffi Nelson's in Eilat? Or else has he turned to religion and hides in the "Or Sameah" Yeshiva?

(B) Or is he writing a bestseller under the title — "How to let the people enjoy"? or "The Right Way" or "Yoram-I-Have-It"?

(C) No — it was not Yoram. The suspicion that the man responsible for our present economic catastrophe is Yoram Aridor has been proved wrong in these very days. Yoram Aridor's many friends can breathe freely — he is not responsible for what happened, he is not the culprit, he is not the man. This is proved, leaving no doubt, by his two last appearances on television. As the Book says, "I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree" (Psalm 37:35).

(D) First, there was the press conference, held by Aridor, accompanied by Prof. Yakir Plessner, in which Aridor explained the reasons for the sickness of our economy, named the people responsible for the present situation, and even suggested how to heal it. It has become clear that if only he had been allowed to carry out the dollarization he had planned, we would not have been stuck in the mud up to our necks. There was something exhilarating in Aridor's self-assurance but also something depressing: How is it that this financial wizard and his learned assistant were not allowed to correct the mistakes made by previous and subsequent ministers and economists?

(E) Whoever saw Aridor's performance at the press conference was convinced for good that he was not the Minister of Finances in the darkest

period of Israel's economy. Because those who accredit Mr. Aridor with less nice qualities than those he is blessed with, could not imagine that a man was born with such boldness. A man who will burn a city and offer his services as a consultant for extinguishing fires. And as such a man does not exist, Yoram Aridor is not responsible for what happened. And as the man responsible was the Minister of Finances in that ominous period, then Yoram Aridor was not Minister of Finances. And as nevertheless we know that he was Minister of Finances, then he is not Yoram Aridor — and if he is not Yoram Aridor, he is not responsible for what happened. And therefore he is right.

(F) And whoever had not been convinced that Mr. Aridor was right, was surely convinced by his appearance on television after the state controller's report on the crimes of the banks. Mr. Aridor has succeeded in convincing us that the discussion about who was The Minister of Finances, a person with no understanding of banks, no interest in the stock market, no standing vis-à-vis the President of the Bank of Israel had no influence on what was happening. As is well known, the Minister of Finances has no understanding of banks, no interest in the stock market, no standing vis-à-vis the President of the Bank of Israel, and is not quite clear on what his employees in the Treasury do. Therefore, all the talk of professional mud throwers against that unknown man, who was at the time in the office of Minister of Finances, is idle unworthy talk (just a moment, until we light our pipe). What were we saying? Yes, I mean, Mr. Aridor is happy that all ends well and he hopes to be reinstated — in his well deserved place — at the top of his party and of the Government of Israel, because the State should not give up the services of the only man who could have saved us from the catastrophe — if only he had been allowed to serve as Minister of Finances in these fateful years. But what can we do if we never appoint the right man at the right time to the right position?

Y . Lapid, "Why is Aridor right?" (*Ma'ariv*, 4.1.1985)

The article discussed here is a bitter, ironic condemnation of Yoram Aridor, Israel's ex-Minister of Finances, held responsible for the economic crisis in the country. Its rhetorical value lies precisely in the mismatch between its utterance meaning and its speaker's meaning, i.e., in its indirect nature. The utterance meaning of the text is basically: "Aridor is right. He is not to blame for the economic situation in Israel. He was not Israel's Minister of Finances when the catastrophe was at its peak, i.e., in the years 1981-1983". It's speaker's

meaning, however, is precisely the opposite. "Aridor is to blame, he is responsible for the economic crisis in Israel, no matter what excuses he now puts forth, since he was the Minister of Finances in the years 1981-1983". In addition to this, the text indirectly accuses Aridor of shamelessness, incompetence, sophistry, and other related vices.

How does the reader reach this final interpretation? What are the clue types available to him, and at which point in the text can a given clue type supply the correct "lead"? We shall mention here but a few of the potential clues:

(1) Obviously the meaning riddle can be solved immediately if the reader exploits extra-linguistic, specific clues (type A1) such as his knowledge of the fact that Aridor was the Minister of Finances in the years 1981-1983. If he also assumes that most (if not all) of the readers are supposed by the author to have this extra-linguistic knowledge, he would probably 'activate' his meta-linguistic, background intuitive knowledge (type B3) of the maxim of quantity and infer that the questions in the first paragraph violate this maxim unless they are ironic. If, however, the reader looks for some confirmation for his solution, he would not find it easily in the text; on the contrary, in paragraph C his solution is contradicted explicitly: "No — it was not Yoram" (=Yoram Aridor). It is therefore natural for him to seek other clues, which would help to support his hypothesis. What are they?

For the sake of the illustration, let us imagine yet another addressee, who does not know that Yoram Aridor was the Minister of Finances of Israel from 1981 through 1983. What type of clues would he employ?

(2) This imaginary reader might exploit meta-linguistic specific clues (type B1) provided in paragraph B. The expression "to let the people enjoy", coined by Mr. Begin, was often used by Aridor, and is generally associated with his personality and with his economic policy. The suggestion that the supposedly unknown person referred to in the text is writing a book with this title can serve as a clue to those readers who have this piece of meta-linguistic specific information. Of course, the title "Yoram-I-Have-It" supplies a more explicit, extra-linguistic specific clue (type A1), since its exploitation depends on the reader's knowledge that Aridor's proper name is Yoram. An additional nuance of irony is introduced if the reader uses his meta-linguistic, specific acquaintance (type B1) with the expression "Yig'al-I-Don't Have", which is associated with yet another ex-Minister of Finances, Yig'al Horowitz, who conducted a policy of strictures, and was finally forced to resign.

(3) In a fairly sophisticated way, paragraph C supplies a meta-linguistic, background clue (type B3). If it were obvious that Aridor is not responsible, the statement "No, it was not Yoram" would have violated the maxim of quantity, since it would be redundant; and if the reader assumes that there is no violation here, he should probably conclude that the suspicion he has by now, i.e., that Yoram Aridor is responsible, although contradicted explicitly, is not altogether absurd.

(4) Paragraph C also provides the reader with a meta-linguistic shallow clue (type B2): if he evaluated the use of the proper name 'Yoram' as violating the register conventions of written, journalistic texts, he would probably detect the ironic tone and its implications. By the same token, the repeated use of *Mr.* in paragraph F can be viewed as a metalinguistic, shallow clue (type B2), drawing on the reader's acquaintance with the convention that in Hebrew a redundant use of *mar* ("Mr.") usually implies the reporter's ironic attitude.[7]

(5) The interpretation of paragraph F draws heavily on extra-linguistic, shallow clues (type A2). The reader, no doubt, having at his disposal a stereotype ("script") of political life, obviously assumes that the Minister of Finances must have some control of the economic events, that he knows a lot about banks and the stock market, that he should be clear on what his employees do, etc. If these assumptions are contradicted explicitly, as in paragraph F, he would probably exploit this fact as a clue indicating the need to look for an indirect speaker's meaning.

(6) The interpretation of the sophistical argumentation in paragraph E draws on extra-linguistic, background knowledge (type A3), drawn from commonsense logic and beliefs. The attempt to prove that Yoram Aridor is not Yoram Aridor seems to contradict our commonsense notion of the world, and may therefore be evaluated as bearing a special speaker's meaning.

4. Clues, cues, and interpretation

The exploitation of contextual clues of all the types listed is required when, in some sense, the interpretation of the text is not 'straightforward' or 'transparent'. Absolute transparency is, of course, an idealization. All texts are, to some extent, 'opaque' — and to that extent they require context in order to be interpreted. It is useful, however, to distinguish between broadly two ways in which a text can be opaque. One way has to do with difficulties in determining the utterance meaning, i.e., in finding — in the context and in the co-text —

the data that help to complete what is 'missing', though somehow 'indicated' in the text. The examples discussed in section 1 are a case in point. Some of them could be said to be 'implicitly deictic' in that they refer, albeit implicitly, to the immediate situation of use. The other way, for which the term 'indirectness' should perhaps be reserved, has to do with moving from the utterance meaning to the speaker's meaning, and occurs not because of any 'missing' element in the text, but by virtue of a 'mismatch', between the (computed) utterance meaning and some piece of what might be called "second channel" information, which suggests that the utterance meaning conventionally assigned to the text is not likely to be the intended speaker's meaning.[8]

If the process of interpretation leaves much room for reliance upon contextual clues, but utterance meaning nonetheless converges with speaker's meaning, the text is considered as direct though opaque. If, on the other hand, in the process of interpretation the addressee detects some reason to believe that the meaning he assigned to the text is not the speaker's meaning, it may be the case that an indirect speaker's meaning is conveyed (cf. Dascal 1983: 127-138). In that case, the primary valuation is tested again and reshaped so as to form a new working profile, which, in turn, is re-evaluated in view of the addressee's conventional assumptions and general background knowledge.

According to this view, then, detecting the nature of the particular 'interpretation problem' that arises, i.e., making (presumably in an intuitive and unknowing way) the distinction between mere opacity and indirectness, is essential for the interpretation of a text, since only the latter 'triggers' a new evaluation. This in turn means that the reader has to be able to distinguish between mismatches and gaps, judiciously employing 'second channel' information. Note that 'second channel' information is as specific and as extralinguistic as our type A1 clues, but it differs from them in the nature of its relevance to the interpretation of the text, since it has to do with features of the situation *surrounding* the text (e.g., with what the reader knows about the writer, the newspaper, the way the text has been handled and displayed, etc.) and not with features of the situation *referred to* in the text.

Our analysis thus suggests that in interpreting a text the reader draws on *two different kinds of information*: (a) *clues,* both co-textual and contextual, which will lead him towards the determination of utterance meaning and speaker's meaning; (b) *cues,* which help him to distinguish between opacity and indirectness. The cue for opacity is the need for gap-filling, whereas the cue for indirectness is a mismatch between utterance meaning and second

channel information. Our analysis further shows that all three levels of contextual information can be used for the construction of both direct and indirect meaning. This is schematized in Figure 2.

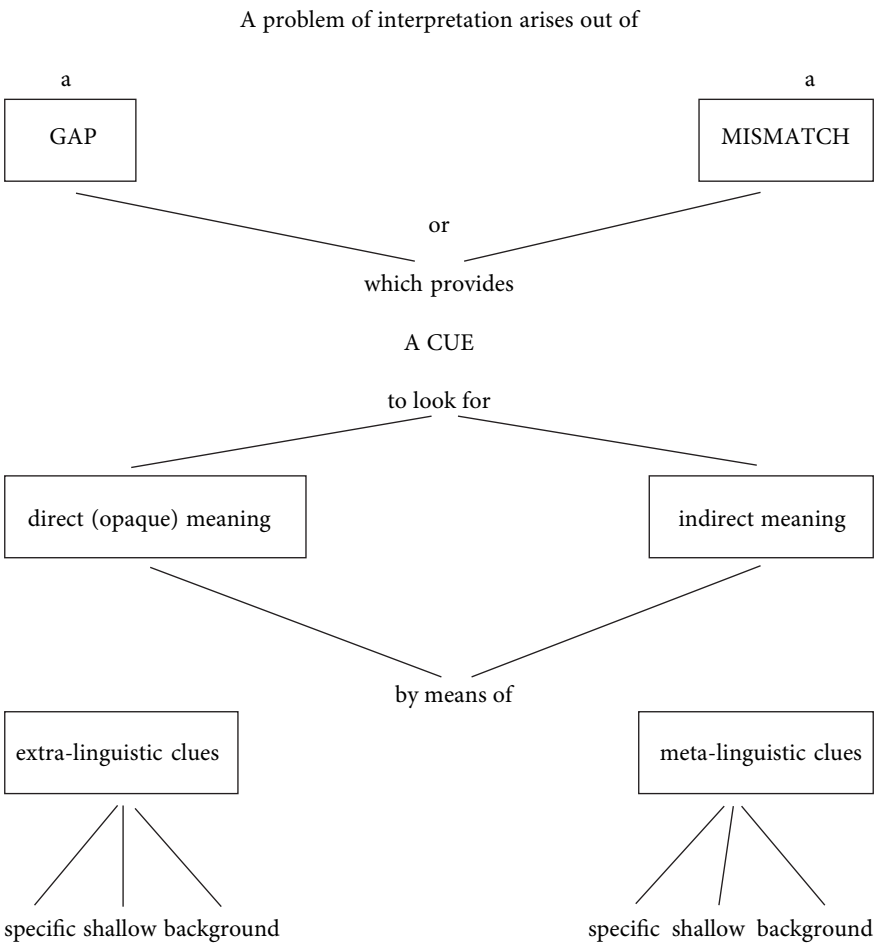


Figure 2. Cues and Clues

B. Cues and clues in context-dependent indirectness

The use of contextual information in discourse understanding has been discussed from various angles: Is there a context-free meaning? What are the interrelations between context and co-text? What are the types of contextual information exploited by the interpreters in their attempt to capture the meaning intended by the speaker?

With the aim of answering the last question, we have suggested a model of contextual information required for the interpretation of speaker's meaning in written texts (see Chapter 8a). We have further differentiated between context when used for the determination of utterance meaning and speaker's meaning. It is on this last differentiation that we wish to elaborate here. For this purpose, we shall first summarize the model (section 1) and discuss the roles played by context in various stages of the interpretation process (section 2). We shall then proceed to illustrate the notions of *cue* and *clue* by applying them to the analysis of a highly indirect written text (section 3), show how 'shortcuts' in the interpretation process may lead to *biased interpretation* (section 4), and suggest some guidelines for further investigation of the interpretation process (section 5).

1. Types and levels of contextual information

Essentially, the model proposes a parallelism between two types of contextual information: *extra-linguistic*, i.e., information related to knowledge of the world, and *meta-linguistic*, i.e., language users' untutored linguistic knowledge — their intuitive 'feeling' for linguistic conventions. Within each of these types, the model further distinguishes three levels: 'specific' (immediate, 'ad hoc') information about the circumstances of utterance, 'shallow' (conventional) assumptions about scripts, and 'general' (background) knowledge of principles and facts.

For example, in a text of political commentary, *specific extra-linguistic* information may include the reader's acquaintance with the political stand of individuals referred to in the text, while *specific meta-linguistic* information may include the reader's acquaintance with that person's habitual speech style; *shallow extra-linguistic* information would probably include the script predicting habitual sequences of political events and attitudes in the country referred to in the text, while *shallow meta-linguistic* information would have

to do with discourse-conventions in the political register habitually used by the people referred to in the text; and *general meta-linguistic* information may include any general, background notions about the world that bear on the text, while *general extra-linguistic* information usually involves the intuitive feeling any reader may have as to general principles underlying discourse cooperation (Grice 1975; Gordon and Lakoff 1975).

Contextual information may be 'activated' and exploited either when the text *converges* with the reader's knowledge — as when one identifies an unspecified quoted source by matching one's meta-linguistic specific knowledge of the idiolect of certain politicians with the language used in the quotation, or when the text *diverges* from the reader's knowledge — as when one assigns ironic value to a textual quotation because one has evaluated it as an intended deviation from one's meta-linguistic shallow knowledge of the habitual political register.

2. Clues and cues

Clearly, both extra-linguistic and meta-linguistic information are exploited whenever the text is not sufficiently transparent; and since, as we know, it is rare to find a text transparent enough to be completely context independent, contextual knowledge is always required, to some extent, for the purpose of achieving a certain degree of transparency. As we have pointed out, however (in Chapter 8a, following Dascal 1983), lack of transparency may have various forms, and reveal itself at different points of the interpretation process. It follows, then, that contextual information may serve as a 'cure' to different types of 'sickness', revealed at different phases of the interpretation process. This point needs further clarification.

Consider the threefold distinction between sentence meaning, utterance meaning and speaker's meaning (Grice 1968; Dascal 1983). Roughly, sentence meaning is the context-independent literal meaning of a sentence, construed out of the meanings of its lexical items and grammatical forms; utterance meaning is the conventional meaning of an utterance once its sentence meaning is adjusted to the situation of utterance, and speaker's meaning is what the speaker means to convey by uttering a given sentence in a given situation. In the search for the speaker's meaning of a written text, contextual information is required at the following points of the interpretation process:

(a) When, starting with sentence meaning, the reader identifies some 'missing elements' and 'fills' all the 'gaps' in an attempt to compute an utterance meaning. The need for gap-filling is often marked in the text by such conventional devices as deictic expressions and comparatives. Thus, the utterance meaning of 'She has graduated from an excellent university' is reached when the context supplies the referent of the deictic expression *she,* and assigns value to the comparative *excellent* by supplying information about standards in the relevant comparison group (i.e., other universities).

(b) When the reader detects some reason to believe that the computed utterance meaning is not a plausible candidate for being a speaker's meaning, i.e., when a mismatch is detected between the utterance meaning and the available contextual information. In the previous example ('she has graduated from an excellent university'), the interpreter's acquaintance with the speaker, with the girl or with the university referred to may lead her to believe that under the specific circumstances of utterance, the speaker cannot possibly be taken to mean that the university is excellent.

(c) When, having detected the mismatch, the interpreter hypothesizes an alternative speaker's meaning, by confronting the computed utterance meaning with the relevant contextual information. In our example, acquaintance with the university in question might lead the interpreter to replace the comparative *excellent* by its semantic antonym. A more complicated interpretation process might lead her to a metaphoric-metonymic reading of *university* as in 'the university of life', thereby generating the speaker's meaning 'Hanna has just gained some important knowledge of life'.

(d) When the alternative speaker's meaning is re-evaluated for mismatch, as in (b).

In the process thus described, the reader seems to perform two types of tasks: she *detects* an 'interpretation problem', making (intuitively) the distinction between gap and mismatch; and she *tries to solve* this problem by the determination of (utterance and speaker's) meanings. Therefore, it is important to distinguish between two categories of contextual information, the criterion being their respective functions in the interpretation process: when exploited for the computation of utterance meaning or speaker's meaning, contextual information is labeled *clue*; whereas when used for the detection of an 'interpretation problem' (i.e., when either a mismatch or the need for gap-filling is detected), it is labeled *cue*. The distinction might be better grasped if the interpreter is conceived of as answering questions at every state of the interpretation process, questions which vary in degree of 'openness'.

In the case of utterance meaning, the *cue question* is: Are there any missing elements, any variables whose values should be determined? Are there any gaps to be filled? An affirmative answer leads to the ensuing *clue question*:

What values should be assigned to the elements? The cue question is very close to a typical alternative yes/no question, because of the textual constraints imposed on its answer. As for the clue question, although it is more 'open', it is heavily constrained by the nature of the 'missing elements': for example, in a given situation of utterance, the set of candidates liable to determine the values of a given personal pronoun is more limited than the set of candidates for such adverbials as *lately*, *around here*, etc.

In the case of speaker's meaning, both the cue question and the clue question are 'looser'. The *cue question* is: Is the computed utterance meaning (or an alternative proposal under consideration) a satisfactory candidate for a speaker's meaning? The question aims at testing and verifying. A negative answer implies the reader's awareness of a mismatch, and triggers the search for an indirect speaker's meaning (cf. Dascal 1983: chapter 3) and leads to the *clue question*: What, then, is the best candidate for a speaker's meaning (given the contextual information available under the circumstances)? Although at this stage both questions are relatively loose, the cue question presupposes a narrower set of possible answers than the clue question, which requires a lot of 'heuristics', and is the most 'open' of the four.

It is in the 'loose' end of this continuum that we shall concentrate in the following section. A sample text will be analyzed in an attempt to further illustrate the difference between cues and clues as applied to the determination of indirect speaker's meaning.

3. Sample text

When introducing his "fresh government", before the dollarization scandal and the stock-market crash, Mr. Shamir expresses "complete confidence" in the then Minister of Finances, Yoram Aridor, "father of fathers" of the "eat, drink and be merry" policy. As soon as Mr. Aridor resigned and Mr. Cohen Orgad took his place, Mr. Shamir came out in support of his new minister, promised to give him "complete backing", and declared that he had "full confidence" in Cohen Orgad (M. Dor, *Ma'ariv*, Oct. 26, 1983).

This text displays two outstanding characteristics:

(a) The text is highly context-embedded. Among the main extra-linguistic features relevant to its understanding, let us mention the following. Mr. Begin, Israel's Prime Minister, resigns. Mr. Shamir, of the same (right wing) party, takes over, introducing a cabinet that did not undergo any major changes. Due to a large-scale

economic crisis, Shamir's Minister of Finances, Aridor, resigns and is replaced by Cohen Orgad.

(b) The text is highly indirect. This observation has been confirmed by informants who were asked to summarize 'what is said', to state whether 'something else' is being conveyed, and, if so, to explain what this 'something else' is.

In order to locate the fragments carrying indirect meaning without relying on our subjective assessments, informants have been asked to rewrite the text in such a way that its 'hidden', indirect meanings would be transmitted 'in a more direct way'. Some of the results were: all quotation marks were omitted; some of the metaphors (e.g., *fresh*) were replaced by their literal equivalents (e.g., *brand-new*); connotative expressions, whether metaphorical (e.g., *father of fathers*) or not (*scandal*) were replaced by more neutral ones (*foremost proponent* and *affair*, respectively); and the qualifier *Mr.* was systematically omitted.

In the present analysis, the expressions which were transformed or omitted are considered as potential cues for indirectness, since they were judged as 'carriers' of indirect meanings. We shall therefore proceed to examine four of them closely. Note that the interpretation-path postulated here should be considered as a rational reconstruction, and is not claimed to have been sequentially followed by interpreters.

3.1 *"Fresh" government*

The utterance meaning is 'brand-new government, carrying new ideas'. This metaphoric reading requires a combination of shallow information, both meta-linguistic (the conventional metaphor *fresh* usually means 'new'), and extra-linguistic (*new* in a political script usually means 'carrying new ideas'). The *cue question* ('is this utterance meaning a satisfactory candidate for a speaker's meaning?') is necessarily answered in the negative, if the reader takes into account her meta-linguistic shallow knowledge of the function of quotation marks: when an expression in quotation marks is conceived of as an echoic mention without being explicitly referred to as such (Sperber and Wilson 1982), they signal: hedge the expression in quotation marks and its immediate co-text; do not rely on conventional script (Weizman 1984a, b; see also Chapter 8a). To answer the *clue question* ('what is the best candidate for speaker's meaning?'), the reader should search for a plausible hedged substitute. In this case, she may be led to a plausible answer by extra-linguistic

specific clues, such as the information about the close similarity between Begin's and Shamir's respective governments. She may also use extra-linguistic shallow clues, such as the script of government changes in parliamentary governments in general and in Israel in particular, and, more specifically, her acquaintance with the norms determining the requirements from a new government. As a result, the qualifier *fresh* in the expression *fresh government* would be plausibly substituted by the hedged expression 'A new government, technically speaking'. Based on both levels of information, in order to get at the speaker's meaning, the interpreter so to speak 'reduces' the quantity of information conveyed by *fresh*, making it equivalent to: 'only technically new'.

3.2 *Mr. Shamir expressed "complete confidence"*

Since all the words and the grammatical structures constituting the expression carry their respective referential meanings, its utterance meaning matches its sentence meaning, except for the extra-linguistic immediate information required for full identification of the referent of *Mr. Shamir*. However, the *cue question* can hardly be answered in the affirmative, if the reader exploits her meta-linguistic shallow awareness of the conventional ironic function of the Hebrew *mar* (= Mr.) in journalistic language (Weizman 1986), as well as the function of quotation marks in indirect speech structures as implying the speaker's attitude (Weizman 1984a). The negative answer to the cue question raises, as always, the *clue* question which, here, amounts to: what, then, *is* the journalist's implied attitude? The most satisfactory answer would be, presumably, that the journalist implies his belief that Shamir should not have expressed confidence in Yoram Aridor, the latter being unworthy of it. To get at this interpretation, the reader probably exploits her shallow extra-linguistic knowledge of the conventional script of parliamentary democracy, which grounded the above mentioned ironic reading of *fresh*, as well as in the extra-linguistic specific knowledge of the widely accepted negative attitude towards Yoram Aridor's policies.

3.3 *The then Minister of Finances*

Here, the transition from sentence meaning to utterance meaning includes no more than the co-textual replacement of the indexical *then* by *when introducing the new government*. The *cue question* is answered in the negative, if the

reader notices the mismatch between this utterance meaning (which explicitly reminds one that Yoram Aridor had already been Minister of Finances when the new government was introduced), on the one hand, and the conventional script of government changes (i.e., for a government to be considered as new and fresh, it should manifest discontinuity with past governments), on the other. This mismatch would be most plausibly interpreted as conveying an ironic criticism of the government, provided it is conceived of as an intended violation of the quality maxim (= meta-linguistic general clue; cf. Section 2), since the description of a government as 'fresh' is 'untruthful' if its ministers have served in the previous government. This speaker's meaning may be supported by the ironic tone detected in the previous expressions.

3.4 *Father of fathers of*

The utterance meaning is clearly this expression's metaphorical reading, i.e., 'arch-conceiver of'. A cue for indirectness is to be found, if the reader employs her meta-linguistic shallow knowledge and, via the specific meta-linguistic acquaintance with Biblical style (to which the literal Hebrew expression belongs), notices an unexpected register shift. Furthermore, a meta-linguistic general knowledge might assist the reader in identifying this unexpected use of a superlative as a violation of the quantity maxim. If, as a result, the *cue* question is answered in the negative, *clues* for speaker's meaning may be found in the meta-linguistic specific context, mainly the negative connotations of the expression, as used for example in *father of fathers of defilement* (= 'the original cause of defilement'), figuring in Jewish tradition (Raschi, Bamidbar 19, 22). Consequently, the speaker's meaning of *father of fathers of the … policy* implies the writer's negative attitude towards the policy's originator, Aridor.

Note, moreover, that the sentence meaning of the expression alludes to family relationships. At the level of speaker's meaning, one cannot avoid noticing a transfer from the political script to family-life script. Extra-linguistic and meta-linguistic shallow knowledge may enhance associations with the emotionally loaded notion of *hamispaxa haloxemet* (literally: 'the fighting family') profoundly embedded (in Israeli culture) in a romantic view of the (historical) political and military scenario in terms of family life, whereby such notions as continuity, backing and support acquire new values. Furthermore, *hamispaxa haloxemet* is usually employed to refer to the hard core of the

Likud Party, to which both Shamir and Aridor belong. Speaker's meaning thus would probably indicate that Shamir is being accused of running political life as if it were family life as well as of nepotism (unduly favoring members of *his* family) — hence, of applying unsuitable norms in public life.

4. Shortcuts

The interpretation process thus conceived presupposes an interplay between textual and contextual information both in the detection of mismatch and in the assignment and the re-evaluation of indirect speaker's meanings. It should be remembered, however, that in real life 'shortcuts' may be taken, whereby the role of textual information is reduced. For example, in the text discussed above, extra-linguistic specific information about the political stand of the writer — the journalist and poet Moshe Dor — may easily provide the reader with a shortcut towards mismatch detection and the deduction of an indirect speaker's meaning, since a sympathetic attitude of this writer toward the right-wing politicians mentioned in the text would hardly be conceivable. This means that contextual information about the circumstances surrounding the writing of the text — i.e., about its author, its publisher, etc. — may 'lead' the interpreter to the same speaker's meaning as does the contextual information having to do with the persons and events referred to in the text. However, shortcuts of this kind are likely to result in 'biased interpretations', whereby the assigned speaker's meaning is ungrounded in the text (and is sometimes even contradicted by it). A case in point is the following excerpt from a political newspaper article about the relations between Egypt and Israel, published in *Le Monde* in 1977 (i.e., prior to the Camp David peace agreement between Israel and Egypt). The reporter, Eric Rouleau, argues that since President Sadat views the wars against Israel as the main cause for the economic deterioration in Egypt, he wishes to sign a peace-treaty with Israel, even at the cost of his relations with the other Arab countries. A major issue in Egyptian politics, claims the reporter, is: who is to blame for the situation?

> L'aspiration à la paix est incontestable. Les divergences portent sur les causes de la crise économique, et sur les moyens de parvenir à un règlement. Pour les moyens d'information contrôlés par l'Etat, la dégradation de la situation et la misère sont exlusivement imputables à l'état de guerre que les autres belligérants contribuent à perpétuer par leur "irréalisme".
>
> L'opposition en revanche, et en particulier celle de gauche, rejette la respon-

> sabilité de l'impasse sur l'« *intransigeance* » d'Israël et fait valoir qu'en tout état de cause les tensions sociales sont surtout le fruit d'un système économique inique, mis au service d'une "*bourgeoisíe parasitaire*" (E. Rouleau, Le Caire: L'idée d'une paix séparée, *Le Monde*, 19.11.77, p.3).

The reporter summarizes two opposing views, the one putting the blame for the (political, and hence economic) situation on the Arab allies, the other blaming Israel (for the political situation) and the Egyptian middle class (for the economic one).

In the search for a speaker's meaning, the cue question would probably be answered in the negative, if the interpreter "activates" her meta-linguistic shallow knowledge of the conventional functions of quotation-marks: when marking a partial, connotative segment of an indirect-speech structure, they convey either the writer's reservations towards the implications of the segment in question, or her reluctance to assume responsibility for it (Weizman 1984a and b). An answer to the clue question requires a hypothesis about the nature of these implications or connotations. By using this type of quotation marks when reporting *two opposing attitudes*, as in our text, the journalist conveys his reluctance to be held responsible for whatever *both of them* connote or imply. Consequently, he is providing us with no clues as to whether in his opinion it is Israel, the Arab allies or the Egyptian middle class that is to blame for the situation in Egypt.

In the Hebrew translation of the report (*Haaretz*, 1.12.99), the Hebrew equivalent of *irréalisme* is in quotation marks, while those of *intransigeance* (*nokshut*) and of *bourgeoisie parasitaire* (*burganut parazitit*) are neither in italics nor in quotation marks. As a result, the reader of the Hebrew translation is likely to assign a different speaker's meaning to this paragraph, namely that the reporter is more sympathetic with the view that puts the blame on Israel and on the Egyptian middle class, than with the opposite one.

Although in reality a shift of this kind could be the result of a mere typing error, in this specific case it seems to be the result of a biased misinterpretation; in her search for speaker's meaning, the translator, acting as an interpreter of the source text, exploits her specific extra-linguistic information about the writer whose attitude, in the 1970's, was considered pro-Arab. By so doing, without returning to the text in order to re-evaluate the assigned speaker's meaning, she ends up with a 'biased misinterpretation' resulting in a translation-shift.

5. Towards further distinctions between cues and clues

As we have shown in some detail (sections 4 and 5) it is not the case that cues and clues differ regarding the type (extra-linguistic and meta-linguistic) or level (specific, shallow and general) of the contextual information employed. They do differ, however, in degree of 'openness' (section 3). Let us refine the distinction, suggesting that the various constituents of the interpretation process should be viewed as varying in terms of the interplay between abduction and deduction in each of them.

To use Peirce's formulation, "abduction is the process of forming an explanatory hypothesis. It is the only logical operation which introduces any new idea; for induction does nothing but determine a value, and deduction merely evolves the necessary consequences of a pure hypothesis" (1960, vol. 5:171). According to this distinction, while the cue questions, aiming at testing and verifying (a hypothetical meaning), are essentially *deductive*, the clue questions are *abductive*, since they share with abduction its main features: (1) *creativity* — the reshaping of an alternative speaker's meaning often requires insights, associations and unexpected hunches. Notions such as *relevance* (Sperber and Wilson 1986), *nearness* (Cresswell 1973) and *conversational demand* (see Chapter 2) can, at best, illuminate the strategies of selection and ordering, but hardly seem to account for the variety of alternative speaker's meanings suggested as solutions; (2) *hypothetic* status — the postulated speaker's meaning is but a hypothesis in need of verification; and (3) *explanatory function* — if found to be a legitimate candidate for a speaker's meaning, the hypothesis may account for the mismatch between the linguistic and contextual data on the one hand and the initially considered speaker's meaning. In this respect, variation in 'openness' (cf. section 3) is related to 'degree of creativity'.

Still, there is room to distinguish between two ways in which clues perform their abductive task, one more 'open' than the other. When exploited for the determination of utterance meaning, clues are typically more 'closed' in that the range of values for the gap-filling task is pre-defined for each variable. When used for finding speaker's meaning, on the other hand, no such constraint occurs, due to the very nature of the 'mismatch' cues that mandates the search for an alternative to the 'transparent' but inadequate speaker's meaning. It is along this distinction in terms of the reasoning strat-

egies, we suggest, that the various components of the interpretation process should be further investigated.

Notes

1. The threefold distinction between sentence meaning, utterance meaning and speaker's meaning underlies our discussion (see Grice 1968; Dascal 1983). We take utterance meaning (Grice's "applied timeless meaning of an utterance type") to be the conventional meaning of an utterance as it is used under given circumstances, after the missing, occasion-dependent elements have been supplied, and all the adjustments to the occasion of use have been made. Speaker's meaning (Grice's "utterer's meaning"), on the other hand, is what a given speaker means by uttering a given utterance in that context.

2. If the quotation marks surrounding the expression *the endless nuances* are interpreted as conveying the speaker's reservation, it is probably no more than some reservations vis-à-vis the use of *endless* in this context.

3. On the use of quotation marks and of *claim* to mark the speaker's attitude, see Weizman (1984a, 1984b).

4. For other classifications and different viewpoints about context see, for example, Clark and Carlson (1981), Parret (1985), and Chapter 25.

5. This is, in fact, a reformulation of what has been suggested by Clark and Carlson (1981:318) as a technical definition of context: "context is information that is available to a particular person for interaction with a particular process on a particular occasion".

6. On the possible roles of over-explicitness, see Dascal (1983:85-91). On deviation from language-specific norms of redundancy and explicitness, see Weizman (1984a:48).

7. This convention is discussed in Weizman (1986).

8. On the notions of mismatch and "second channel" information as applied to speech, see Dascal (1983: chapter 3), as well as Dascal (1985). Their application to texts requires, of course, some elaboration, but it seems to be quite straightforward.

Chapter 9

Models of interpretation

1. Man as a meaning-hunter

Perhaps the best characterization of the species *Homo Sapiens* lies in its members' craving for meaning. We do not simply "see" what impinges upon our eyes: We always see such stimuli as this or that — as a table, a mother's face, a tiger; this is what the stimuli "mean" to us. If, while hearing talk in an entirely unknown and alien language, we detect a sequence of sounds that matches some word of our own language, we cannot but recognize it and attach to it its familiar meaning, though we know it cannot have that meaning in the alien language. In dichotic hearing experiments, where we are instructed to attend only to the nonsense syllables fed into one ear, if suddenly a familiar word is fed into the other ear (the one we are not supposed to be attending to), we immediately recognize it because it has meaning for us. We connect unrelated events so as to find a meaning in them; we discern premonitory or warning signs everywhere; we interpret every movement or lack of movement of our companions as meaningful; and so on and so forth.

Yet, however immediately we "recognize" or "find" meaning, this precious good is forever something "hidden". Though we tend to describe it as being *in* the stimulus, it lies in fact "behind" the stimulus. The latter functions as a starting point, a "sign", from which we *infer* a meaning. For the most part we are satisfied with the first meaning we find. But, if pressed by the circumstances, we are ready to go on in our search. We can then either replace the first assigned meaning by some new one, or else add to it further layers of "deeper" meaning.

We are, thus, constantly hunting for meaning and our appetite for this essential staple in our spiritual diet is insatiable. But how do we know where to stop? What are the constraints and presuppositions that regulate our search? How, in short, do we or should we go about hunting for meaning?

Of course, different theories of meaning provide different answers to these questions. But one should try to chart the vast territory of theories of meaning, in order to draw — at least schematically — the contours of the main types of

answers. I want to propose here my own idiosyncratically biased map of a part of this territory. The part in question is confined to meaning as it occurs in linguistic communication. The idiosyncrasy stems from my focusing on the assumptions underlying the different conceptions as to how are we to go about hunting for the meaning of discourse. And the bias lies in my espousing and having contributed to one of the models here discussed.

2. The cryptographic and the hermeneutic models

We can begin by discerning two 'ideal types', which represent diametrically opposed conceptions about meaning and about what it is that one is doing when one goes about trying to find meaning.

According to the 'cryptographic' model, the meaning (say, of an utterance or another piece of discourse) is objectively there, as it were beneath the surface of the sign, and what the hunter or interpreter is trying to do is to uncover that underlying meaning. According to the 'hermeneutic' model, the meaning is not "there" but "here"; it is the interpreter that grants meaning to the sign by relating to it *qua* interpreter. While for the former model the interpreter's activity is one of *discovery*, for the latter it is one of *creation*. For the former, meaning is a *datum* to be inferred from other data (e.g., the signs); for the latter, it is a *construct*, to be engendered in the interpretative process, which is no doubt sparked by the presence of the sign, but necessarily goes well beyond whatever may be *in* the sign or *beneath* it.[1]

For the cryptographic model, no matter how difficult and protracted the search for the meaning, there is at bottom a fact of the matter which permits to assess the result: You either have discovered the meaning or not. A sign usually belongs to a system of signs, a 'code'. If you know the code, your task is to apply its rules in order to decode the given sign. If you don't, you have first to "break" the code, i.e., to discover its key, and then to apply it to the given sign. In both cases, success is objective; it is a matter of using the right code and key in the right way.

For the hermeneutic model, there is no ultimate fact of the matter by reference to which the results of the interpretative process are to be judged. Different interpreters, each with his/her own 'prejudices', or the same interpreter in different circumstances, will construe differently the meaning of the same sign. Some of these constructs may be judged, on the lights of yet another interpreter, as better than others for this or that purpose. But there is

no interpreter-free and purpose-free criterion whereby one of the constructs can be chosen as constituting *the* objective meaning of that sign. For this model, talk of codes and keys is misleading; even assuming that there are such things, the very decision as to what code or key to apply to a given sign in a given circumstance is interpreter- and purpose-dependent.

In the cryptographic model, the centerpiece of the interpretative process is *semantics*; it is supposed to provide the rules that assign meanings to *simple* signs and the rules that determine the meanings of compounds as a function of their structure and of the meanings of their components. In the hermeneutic model, the emphasis is rather on the interpreter's contribution to the process. Nothing really 'determines' the meaning, but the most influential factor is certainly not a set of semantic rules; it is rather the interpreter's baggage: his/her background, point of view, bias, purposes, expectations, etc. Without an active use of such a set of 'prejudices' — the defenders of the hermeneutic model contend — no interpretative process is possible; and, furthermore, any attempt to neutralize the effects of the inevitable variability of such a prejudicial baggage on the results of the process is doomed.

Both models, for entirely different reasons, have a strikingly similar consequence: Both neglect or minimize the role of the sign producer. By stressing either the role of the code or that of the interpreter, each of the models overlooks the fact that, in communication, signs are produced in communicative acts performed by agents animated by certain communicative intentions. On the cryptographic model, this fact is taken into account only in order to determine what code to use in deciphering the sign; after all, if you know that the Guarani words you read in a rock were inscribed there through erosion, you shouldn't perhaps read into them the meanings prescribed by the Guarani semantic rules, unless you believe the invisible hand of the Guarani equivalent of Eolos performed the inscription. On the hermeneutic model, since meaning is not "there", it makes no sense to assume that it has been "put there" by the sign-producer; hence, it makes no sense to restrict the interpreter's freedom by subordinating the interpretative process to an attempt to reconstruct or capture the sign producer's communicative intention.

The coincidence of the two models in their neglect of the role of the sign producer is well illustrated in the theory of literature. Cryptographically oriented, objectivist 'textualists' denounce what they call the 'intentional fallacy' — the assumption that the interpretation of a text requires biographical and circumstantial evidence as to its author's intentions; for them, such inten-

tions are essentially irrelevant for interpretation. A similar conclusion is drawn by hermeneutically oriented 'deconstructionists', who view the text as a piece of raw material, to be treated as an inscription accidentally found in a rock, whereupon interpreters are the ones who carve whatever meanings they want.[2]

3. The pragmatic model

The model I call 'pragmatic' seeks to correct this neglect of the sign producer, typical of the other two models. As suitable to every attempt to find a golden middle, it purports to do so without committing a similar mistake vis-à-vis the two factors highlighted by its competitors, i.e., without neglecting the roles of the code and of the interpreter.

In the pragmatic model, communicative meaning is neither an independent *datum* nor an interpreter's *construct*. It is *produced* by an agent, the sign producer. Producing a meaningful sign is a communicative *action*. An action — as opposed to a mere happening — is always animated by an intention.[3] Just as the description of an action is incomplete unless it comprises the intention that animates the action, so too the description of a communicative act — and especially of its 'meaning' — must refer to the producer's intention. In communicative actions, the role of the intention is even more salient than in other actions, for, as persuasively argued by Grice (1957) and other champions of the intentional theory of meaning (e.g., Schiffer 1988), the success of a communicative action is predicated upon the addressee's *recognition* of its underlying intention.

In English, quite conveniently, *to mean* is also *to intend*, so that one can naturally refer to what the utterer intends to convey by producing a (linguistic) utterance as the 'speaker's meaning'. Since the communicative aim of the utterer is to convey to an addressee his/her speaker's meaning, the *communicative* duty of the addressee, in so far as (s)he is effectively engaged in the communicative exchange, is to identify *that* meaning. Pragmatic interpretation is the process whereby (s)he performs this task. I call it 'pragmatic' because, although making substantial use of the semantics, the interpreter cannot assume that the result of the semantic decoding of the utterance (the 'sentence meaning' and the 'utterance meaning') coincides with the speaker's meaning. For it is an undisputable fact about the use of language that one

can convey by one's words something different from what they semantically mean.[4]

The pragmatic model shares with the cryptographic model the assumption that there are 'objective' meanings, associated to their signs by virtue of semantic rules that somehow evolved (and continue to evolve) in the course of the development of language. Such meanings, which may be called 'literal meanings', play an essential role in communication.[5] But the two models differ in their assessment of this role. While the cryptographic model rests content with semantic decoding alone (with or without the help of the context), the pragmatic model insists that interpretation *never* consists in mere semantic decoding, not even when the utterance is 'transparent' and the speaker's meaning coincides with the semantic meaning. For, even in such cases, a further step of interpretation, where contextual information is necessarily used, is needed in order to establish the coincidence in question.

The acknowledgment of the essential role of contextual information in interpretation, coupled with the awareness of the variability and elusiveness of any precise notion of literal meaning, has led some researchers to dismiss this notion altogether, and to place the whole burden of meaning-bearing on the shoulders of the 'context'. I have dubbed this view 'contextualism' (Chapter 25). Since, in essence, it consists in denying to semantics any significant role in interpretation, it suggests a model that might be called *super-pragmatic*. On this model, the interpreter somehow grasps the speaker's meaning *directly* on the basis of contextual information, without having to take into account the semantic meaning of the speaker's utterance (cf. Gibbs 1984, 1989). The pragmatic model, unlike the super-pragmatic, contends that, without granting a substantial role to crystallized semantic meanings, it would be impossible to explain the existence of linguistic communication of the complexity and richness we usually engage in (cf. Chapters 25, 26a, and 26b).

To illustrate the differences above, consider the following example, due to Spinoza:

> I have recently heard someone shouting that his house flew over his neighbor's hen and I have not thought that he made a mistake, because his intention seemed to me pretty clear (*Ethica* II, prop. 47, *scholium*; translation M.D.).

From the point of view of the pragmatic model, Spinoza is right on two counts and wrong on one. He is right in stressing that what matters in communica-

tion is the recognition of the speaker's intention, of what is in the speaker's mind. He is also right in pointing out that contextual information (in this case, the background knowledge about the flying possibilities of hens and houses) may override the semantic meaning of the utterance in determining the speaker's meaning. On these two counts, Spinoza sides with the pragmatic, against the cryptographic model. But Spinoza's implicit suggestion that the semantic meaning of the utterance may be totally irrelevant for determining the speaker's meaning, which would turn him into an adherent of the super-pragmatic model, can hardly be defended; were we ignorant of the literal meanings of *hen*, *house* and *fly*, we wouldn't be able to detect the absurdity of the utterance meaning; consequently, we wouldn't have any grounds to treat it as a mere 'slip of the tongue' and assign to the speaker a different, more reasonable communicative intention.[7]

With the hermeneutic model, the pragmatic model shares the belief in the importance of contextual, non-semantic information in the interpretation process. The characteristics and circumstances of the interpreter, to whom the utterance is addressed, are certainly an important piece of the relevant 'context'. Yet, it is not all-important, as suggested by the hermeneutic model. The interpreter is not granted, by the pragmatic model, total freedom of interpretation, for (s)he is constrained by the need to retrieve the speaker's intention as expressed in words having a definite literal meaning.[8]

4. Radical interpretation and real interpretation

The pragmatic model, with its insistence on the need to take into account *both* the semantic meaning and the speaker's intentions, complicates the task of the meaning hunter. For now, instead of one, there are at least two hidden variables to hunt for. Indeed there may be even more, for communicative intentions are supposed to reveal or express other 'mental states' or 'propositional attitudes' (e.g., beliefs, desires, fears) of the speaker. The problem is further compounded by the fact that, as stressed by Davidson (1973, 1974a), the assignment of values to these various hidden variables is essentially *interdependent*.[9] An interpreter is now faced with the task of solving simultaneously a rather complex system of equations.

Philosophers have tried to strip this problem down to its essentials, by devising an imaginary situation of 'radical interpretation', where the interpreter, beginning 'from scratch', has to find out the values for the different

unknowns.[10] In other words, starting only from observations about the physical behavior and environment of an individual, the interpreter has to reach both an assignment of meanings to the utterances (or other communicative acts) of that individual, and an assignment of mental states (beliefs, desires, etc.) to him.

Lewis (1974) describes the situation of radical interpretation in terms of four factors: (a) *P* is the set of all facts about, say, Karl viewed as a physical system, including such things as Karl's propositional attitudes to act in certain ways in physically specifiable circumstances, the causal history of his physical states, etc.; (b) A_o is the set of Karl's propositional attitudes (beliefs and desires) as expressed in our language; (c) A_k is the set of Karl's propositional attitudes (beliefs and desires) as expressed in Karl's language; (d) *M* is the set of Karl's meanings, i.e., the truth conditions of his full sentences as well as the denotations, etc., of the constituents of these sentences. The problem of radical interpretation can now be stated as follows: "Given *P*, the facts about Karl as a physical system, solve for the rest" (1974: 331). There are a number of constraints that make the problem solvable. These are "the fundamental principles of our general theory of persons", which "tell us how beliefs and desires and meanings are normally related to one another, to behavioral output, and to sensory input" (334). Such a theory of persons can be expressed in terms of a set of principles.

The *Principle of Charity* and the *Principle of Rationalization* constrain A_o and its relationship to *P*. The former says that "Karl should be represented as believing what he ought to believe, and desiring what he ought to desire" (336). The latter says that "Karl should be represented as a rational agent; the beliefs and desires ascribed to him by A_o should be such as to provide good reasons for his behavior" (337). The *Principle of Truthfulness* tells us to ascribe to Karl beliefs and desires that are in accordance with a 'truthful' use of his language, i.e., beliefs and desires that are in accordance with the meanings assigned by *M* to the sentences of the language, and with the 'normal' communicative intentions associated with the use of these sentences. For example, if *M* assigns to 'Ionlay!' the meaning "a lion is present", then A_o should include, among other propositional attitudes, a desire not to utter 'Ionlay!' unless a lion is present, a belief that his partners have a similar desire, a belief that a lion is present at times when he hears 'Ionlay!' uttered, etc. (338-339). The principle specifies which beliefs and desires to ascribe to Karl by virtue of his mastery of his language.

But from this principle alone, it cannot be assumed that Karl actually uses (or is disposed to use) his language in order to express his beliefs and desires. This is the job of the *Manifestation Principle*, according to which "Karl's beliefs, as expressed in his own language, should normally be manifest in his dispositions to speech behavior" (339). For example, if Karl happens to believe that a lion is present, he should have a disposition to utter 'Ionlay!'. That is to say, by 'looking into' Karl's speech dispositions or actual utterances, one can not only infer the beliefs and desires that reflect his knowledge of the language, but also his other beliefs and desires.

Finally, the *Triangle Principle* ensures that we can safely 'translate' the contents of A_k into those of A_o. Essentially, it asserts that if two sentences (in Karl's language and in our language) have the same truth conditions, then the mental states that have a 'central role' in the 'proximate causal histories' of utterances of those sentences are alike, other things being equal.[11]

Suppose now Karl utters 'Ionlay!'. In the situation of radical interpretation, we have not at first the slightest idea of what this utterance means, nor of which belief or desire Karl expresses with this utterance. We cannot even say that by his utterance he means 'ionlay' and expresses the belief or desire that ionlay. For Karl may well utter 'Ionlay!' non-transparently (cf. Dascal 1983), i.e., meaning and expressing thereby something other than the 'normal' meaning of that utterance in his language. That is to say, we haven't at first the slightest idea of how to fill in the relevant portions of M and $A_{k,}$ and *a fortiori* of expressing Karl's relevant propositional attitude in our own language (that is, filling in A_o). How can we go about performing these tasks, i.e., solving the problem of interpretation?

According to Lewis, the problem is solvable thanks to the constraining power of the principles enumerated above. He proposes the following strategy. We begin by observing Karl's behavior and environment. We note that there is a lion in front of him and that Karl displays fear behavior. The Principle of Charity entitles us to assign to him the belief that there is a lion in front of him. For, unless P contains the information, say, that Karl is blind, we should assume that he believes what he sees, like any reasonable person. The Principle of Rationalization supports this assignment: Karl's belief that a lion is present is as good a reason as one could wish for his fear behavior (provided P does not contain the information, say, that in Karl's habitat lions do not attack humans). In these circumstances, we can ascribe to Karl's utterance 'Ionlay!' the meaning "a lion is present" (other observations contained in P,

and the Principle of Truthfulness, rule out such candidates as "come here lion" or "go away lion" or "beware, lion!", etc.). Proceeding systematically in this way, we fill in completely first A_o, then M, and finally A_k — for we have now the means to determine when Karl speaks transparently and when not.

Lewis's strategy combines features of the cryptographic and the superpragmatic models. With the first, he shares the view that there is a rock bottom fact of the matter concerning beliefs and meanings, and that his strategy of interpretation offers a way of definitely reaching that rock bottom. With the superpragmatic model, it shares the view that it is possible to bypass meanings in the endeavor to ascribe beliefs.

Davidson proposes a different strategy, which emphasizes — following Quine — the indeterminacy involved in any solution to the interpretation problem. Consequently, he suggests a series of successive loops of tentative assignments of values to all the variables, followed by the necessary revisions. Furthermore, unlike Lewis, Davidson assigns a central role to semantics in the process, by stressing the privileged status of the attitude of 'holding a sentence true' as an indicator of both the speaker's beliefs about the world and about (the semantics of) his language (Davidson 1974a: 152). Davidson thus gives pride of place to the 'linguistic' principles of Truthfulness and Manifestation, as opposed to Lewis who relegates them to a secondary role. But, as Davidson points out (1974b: 347), both principles can only be relied upon when accompanied by appropriate 'checking' mechanisms, which make use of contextual information as well. In this, Davidson's approach shares much with the pragmatic model. His Quinean emphasis on the indeterminacy of meaning and on holism, however, bring him sometimes closer to the hermeneutic model.

Whatever their merits, these strategies cannot be straightforwardly extrapolated to situations of real interpretation. As defined, the situation of radical interpretation contains two extreme assumptions: Omniscience concerning P and total ignorance concerning the other three factors. This is the meaning of the phrase 'from scratch'. Accordingly, solving the problem of interpretation in such a situation consists in "advancing from omniscience about P alone to omniscience also about A_o, M and A_k" (Lewis 1974: 339-340). Needless to say that in real situations of interpretation one can assume neither omniscience nor total ignorance. But even if we had omniscience about P, this would hardly help us in our interpretative endeavors, unless we had also immediate access to every fact in P, and a way of determining which facts in this very large (if not infinite) set were relevant to the task at hand.

Fortunately, it is our non-total ignorance that serves as a guide to search *P* in order to find the (provisionally) relevant data. We usually operate within traditions where certain beliefs, desires and meanings can be standardly assigned to individuals and their utterances. Such 'default' assignments are the starting point in the process of 'checking' the environment for relevant indications that either confirm or disconfirm the initial assignments. Under these circumstances, omniscience becomes unnecessary both as a starting point and as a goal of the process of interpretation. Instead, reasonable — though not conclusive — interpretations can be reached, on the basis of reasonable — though not complete — evidence. This is what the pragmatic model is all about.

5. Reasons, intentions and causes

In one way or another, the principles of radical interpretation are operative in real interpretation as well. In particular, the appeal to the notion of rationality, as embodied in Lewis's principles of Rationalization and Charity for example, cannot be avoided (see Chapter 15b). For communication is a goal-oriented activity, and it must at least be ruled by the kind of instrumental rationality that governs every goal-directed activity. Ultimately, interpreting a communicative act amounts to trying to determine the agent's reason or communicative aim, given the particular choice of means embodied in the act.

Not surprisingly, the 'logic of conversation' initially proposed by Grice (1975, 1978), which serves as the basis for much of current theorizing in pragmatics, relies heavily on the notion of rationality. Grice postulates a general 'Principle of Cooperation', from which it deduces four specific 'Maxims' that can be presumed to be obeyed by anyone that engages in communication. Grice himself has indicated that he considers these maxims to be derivable from general principles of rationality. Their binding force is such that, in general, ostensive violations of the maxims are not taken to be real violations, but rather ways of conveying indirect meanings, which Grice calls "conversational implicatures". Such implicatures, in Grice's system, are effectively recognizable only by an interpreter that seeks to identify a speaker's communicative intention that explains away the apparent violation of a maxim, thus permitting to preserve the assumption of the speaker's rationality. Accordingly, the (apparent) deviation itself is construed as intentionally

produced, and as providing a clue for the interpreter to look for the indirect meaning the speaker presumably intends to convey.

But how far can and should an interpreter go in his endeavor to charitably explain the speaker's communicative behavior in terms of (inferred) intentions and reasons? At some point the attribution of sophisticated, complex and remote intentions is bound to become a baroque construction, intolerably unparsimonious even to those that are willing to relax the strictures of Ockham's Razor. And occasionally, there may be easily available, simpler and more parsimonious nonintentional causal explanations for a piece of communicative behavior that does not conform to the maxims. For example, someone can make a clearly irrelevant remark in the course of a conversation just because he momentarily lost track of what is being talked about, or else because he lapsed into daydreaming. In such cases, the irrelevance shouldn't be interpreted as intentional, and therefore any implicature grafted on it would be totally misplaced (see Chapter 2).

In general, if some behavior does not conform to a norm or rule, this fact can be described in different ways, only some of which involve intentions. The behavior can be 'rule-ignorant' — when the person's failure to comply with the rule is simply due to his/her ignorance of the rule; or else it can be 'rule-error' behavior — when the person is momentarily unaware of the rule or of its current relevance. In both cases, the explanation for the deviation is causal, rather than intentional. The behavior can also be a genuine case of 'rule-violation', when the agent not only knows the rule and is aware of it, but also consciously decides not to comply with it. And it can, further, be 'negative rule-reflective' behavior, when it also involves a negative evaluation of the rule — in which case the rule is not so much violated as it is consciously rejected.[12] Obviously, only when the communicatively 'deviant' behavior is of the third type its interpretation requires and justifies an appeal to the Gricean implicature-generating apparatus. But how do we know whether it is of this type?

Although I have considered so far only non-conformity with a rule, cases of conformity raise similar questions: Are they the result of conscious rule-following by the agent, or of a regularity that governs the agent's behavior independently of his will, or else of an occasional coincidence? Obviously, an alarm clock that rings at 7 A.M. does not intend to tell you that it is time to wake up, even though it regularly rings when *you* intend to wake up. This is an easy case, for we know that alarm clocks are not capable of performing intentional actions, communicative or other. But what about

more complex devices such as computers and robots? And what about persons — fully qualifiable as intentional agents — who sometimes behave mechanically or absentmindedly or driven by causes they are not aware of? How do we know when to interpret their actions 'charitably' in terms of reasons and intentions and when to interpret them 'uncharitably' in terms of non-intentional causality?

The answer is that it is very hard, if not impossible to really know, because of the elusiveness of the inferred entities (i.e., intentions, reasons, mental states, and even plain physical causality) involved. Indeed, the philosophical debate about the ontological and epistemological status of such entities is far from settled. The interpreter should better keep away from these troubled waters, and consider the issue as a normative, rather than a factual one. The proper question to ask would then be: When *should* an interpreter press hard for an explanation in terms of intentions and reasons and when should (s)he press for a causal explanation? And the answer to this is: "It depends". It depends on the interpreter's purpose(s). If a defendant accused of murder can be proved to have been driven by some cause beyond his control, rather than by his own conscious intention, he is likely to be considered not guilty. From the defendant's point of view, it is therefore preferable not to interpret his behavior as that of a rational agent whose intentions control his actions.[13] If, on the other hand, someone is a candidate for the Nobel Prize, it is preferable for his supporters not to try too hard to find out how much of the candidate's theory was due to the hallucinogenic drugs he had been taking. But surely — a relentless objectivist would insist — there is a fact of the matter: The scientist either was or was not drugged; the defendant either had or had not formed a conscious intention to kill the victim. To which an unswerving hermeneuticist could reply by pointing out that such alleged facts of the matter are heavily theory laden, and that every interpreter construes his interpretation in the light of the most self-serving theory he can find.

Fortunately, the follower of the pragmatic model can set aside these disputes. (S)he can view them as lying beyond the scope of the pragmatic model as such. For this model begins to work only once a presumption in favor of reasons and intentions has been admitted. Such a presumption need not be factually established nor ontologically grounded. It suffices that it be pragmatically (in the sense the pragmatist philosophers give to this term) justified. Such justifications can be based on normative preferences, purposes and interests, although they cannot disregard reasonable and undisputed

'factual' evidence. It would be unreasonable to insist that an intentional interpretation must be provided for every behavior. Consequently, the heuristics of pragmatic interpretation should contain a 'rule' to the effect that when a plausible and uncontroversial nonintentional causal explanation of the behavior is available, pragmatics should hand over the task of interpretation to the appropriate causal theory.

6. Deep structure causal models

Some, however, may not rest content with the kind of compromise adumbrated in the last paragraph. They might argue that the ready dismissal of nonintentional causal interpretations (or their relegation to a marginal role) is due to a lack of willingness (or ability) to explore thoroughly the possibilities of the non-intentional causal track. When this is done, a different style of interpretation emerges.

According to this approach, human behavior in general, and communicative behavior in particular, has deep-seated causes, of which the behaving individuals are for the most part completely unaware. A true understanding, a satisfactory interpretation of behavior, must disclose those deep-seated causes. Otherwise, it is nothing but illusory pseudo-understanding or pseudo-interpretation, which may itself be derived from deep causes of which the interpreter is unaware. The kinds of deep causes invoked may differ. Roughly, they may be either infra-individual (Freudian repressed desires, genetic endowments, etc.) or supra-individual (Marxian class interests, Foucauldian power struggles, sociobiological reactions to environmental changes, etc.). But the pattern of interpretation is essentially the same: The ultimate explanation for a given behavior is to be found at some 'deep structure' level.

In this kind of models, meaning is conceived neither as an objective *datum*, nor as an interpreter's *construct*, nor as *produced* by intentional agents. It is viewed as a *product* of an interplay of forces that underlie and determine human activity. In so far as these forces are not under individual control, the meanings they produce are not 'subjective' (as they are in the hermeneutic model, and to some extent in the pragmatic model as well). But this does not mean that meanings are 'objective' in the quasi-Platonic sense prevalent among supporters of the cryptographic model. For they are not independent entities, living their own life, according to a logic of their own. Their 'logic' is

nothing but that of the underlying forces that engender them, and from which they derive their whole 'life'.

In the deep-structure models, intentions and reasons — just like meanings — are also to be viewed as derived entities. Furthermore, to pretend that intentions and reasons are the actual grounds for (communicative and other) actions, and thereby the sources of meaning, is to camouflage the real grounds and the real sources. The appeal to reasons and conscious intentions thus becomes, on this view, a cover-up, a distortion, a facade. The Marxian notion of 'ideology' and the Freudian notion of 'rationalization' epitomize this degradation of reasons and intentions. In both cases, elaborate rational explanations of action are nothing but cover-ups for the real motives (be they class interests or impulses), whereby a person fools himself, the others, or both. In both cases, the person's logical and plausible 'good' reasons are not the 'true' reasons for his/her conduct, regardless of whether (s)he is aware of it or not.[14] Interpretation that rests content with such dubious "good" reasons is, therefore, itself flawed if not altogether a part of the cover-up scheme. The only possible true interpretation must relentlessly pierce through these layers of camouflage in order to reach solid ground, at the deep structure level. In the course of this deep plunge, not only the subject's intentions and reasons are reduced to their 'true' causes: The notion of subject itself is thereby unmasked as no less unnecessary and misleading.

On the face of it, the opposition between the deep structure approach, taken as an encompassing model of interpretation, and the models previously discussed is absolute. On closer (and critical) inspection, however, the differences may not be so big.[15] It can be pointed out, indeed, that deep structure explanations are uncomfortably similar to hermeneutic constructions. Armed with an over-embracing interpretation scheme, and with the license to disregard the subject's ostensive reasons and intentions, deep structure theorists have a ready-made way of constructing, in every case, the interpretations that suit best their *parti pris*. If, in addition to this, we were to accept the Popperian claim that they are unfalsifiable, the basis for the alleged objectivity of deep structure explanations would be seriously undermined. If so, however, their reasons would be no truer than the kinds of reasons they seek to disqualify.

7. Freeze

Whoever engages in a cartographic adventure must end up by providing at least a tentative map. I propose to freeze the results obtained in my present geographic exploration of the land of meaning and interpretation in the following picture. Imagine an iceberg. Its tip is the sign to be interpreted. Underlying it, there are several layers of 'meaning' to be hunted for. Immediately below the surface, lies the semantically crystallized meaning, which the cryptographic model aims at. Deeper down, the intentions, reasons, speakers' meanings — the prey of pragmatic hunters of meaning. Still deeper, the various tangled frozen woods where deep structure theorists chase their favorite game. Some of these woods may reach truly abysmal depths such as Foucauldian 'archeological' sites and Jungian 'archetypal' pits. Hermeneuticists, who don't like scuba diving, refuse to plunge into the water. Some of them even deny that the iceberg has any covert parts at all, not to mention deep foundations. They do not like hunting, either. Instead, they prefer to raise their own pets, in castles perfectly fit for their taste, built in the thin air on the tip of the iceberg.

What this picture suggests is that, rather than competing with each other, the different models here discussed should perhaps be viewed as complementing each other, as addressing different slices of the vast world of 'meaning'. But this is only possible if none of the models falls prey to its natural expansionistic tendency to invade the other slices. To be sure, some of the slices may be very thin and the boundaries between them are certainly fuzzy. Still, shifting metaphors, each model's interpretative niche ought to be fiercely protected and respected. Otherwise, the whole iceberg would crumble.

The reason I am particularly fond of the pragmatic model is that it is concerned with preserving the ecological niche of an endangered species, namely Man as the responsible, free, rational agent/subject who — at least sometimes — intentionally originates and is the master of his/her actions. Admittedly this is an idealization, which more often than not fails to apply. But, however small its share in explaining human behavior in general, I think this idealization still has the lion's share in explaining human *communicative* behavior. I also happen to think that it is an idealization worth preserving and fighting for.

Notes

1. The term 'cryptographic' came to my mind in connection with Galileo Galilei's well-known comparison of the universe to a book whose (mathematical) language men can only understand by finding its key (*Opere* VI: 232). Popper's conception of a World III, where theories, arguments and *meanings* lead an objective existence, independent of Worlds I (physical) and II (psychological) is another example of the cryptographic approach. Though Platonism is not a necessary component of such an approach, many of its defenders tend to espouse some version of Platonism (e.g., Malebranche, Frege). As approximate representatives of the hermeneutic model as described here, I would mention Gadamer and Rorty.

2. On the intentional fallacy, see Wimsatt (1968) and Wimsatt and Beardsley (1964). On the deconstructionist position, see for example the essay "Force et signification" in Derrida (1967).

3. Unintentional actions, unlike nonactions that are mere happenings, are actions animated by the 'wrong' intentions. For a discussion of this important distinction, see Searle (1981), Dascal and Gruengard (1981) and Juarrero Roque (1988).

4. For details on the pragmatic model here sketched, see Dascal (1983).

5. I use the expression 'literal meaning' in a broader sense than usual, to refer to all sorts of *conventionalized* meanings (see Chapter 26a).

6. In a sense, the superpragmatic model construes all communicative situations in terms of what Blackburn (1984: 111) calls "the one-off predicament", namely a situation in which "I need to get you to believe something, p, and I can rely upon no shared language". As Blackburn points out, to focus on such situations is necessary when someone's aim is to provide an account of what it is to have or to acquire a shared language. But once a language is shared, i.e., once "a way of inducing belief becomes fixed in a community" (113), communication can take advantage of this fact in order to somehow bypass the guesswork required for the direct recognition of intentions in the oneoff situation.

7. I am not suggesting that Spinoza actually adhered to this model. His critical attitude towards language in the *Ethics* aims at denying it any role in the higher levels of cognition and knowledge, rather than at providing an account of linguistic communication as such. For a comparative analysis of Spinoza's philosophy of language, see Dascal (1990b).

8. For a detailed comparison between the hermeneutic and the pragmatic conceptions of interpretation, see Chapter 29.

9. Suppose John lifts his arm at the end of a lecture. To say that this gesture *means* "I request permission to ask a question" is to say that in John's community people believe that it is appropriate to ask questions after a lecture, that one should request permission for it, that some such gesture is a standard way to do so, etc. To say that the gesture *means* "I request ..." *for John* implies assigning to him all these beliefs. Meaning assignment thus depends on the assignment of a structure of beliefs. But to interpret John's gesture as conveying his intention to request permission to ask a question, i.e., to assign to him this

specific propositional attitude, depends in turn on assigning to his gesture the above meaning.

10. "Since we cannot hope to interpret linguistic activity without knowing what a speaker believes, and cannot found a theory of what he means on a prior discovery of his beliefs and intentions, I conclude that in interpreting utterances from scratch - in *radical* interpretation — we must somehow deliver simultaneously a theory of belief and a theory of meaning" (Davidson 1974a: 144).

11. The remaining principle in Lewis's system, the *Principle of Generativity* (which corresponds to Frege's principle of compositionality), though fundamental in semantics, need not concern us here.

12. This classification and terminology are due to Shimanoff (1980).

13. Notice here the inversion in the meaning of 'charity': in the circumstances described, it is certainly more charitable (for the defendant) not to be treated according to the Principles of Charity and Rationalization.

14. Here is an example of unconsciously motivated rationalization: "A subject under hypnosis is told that when he wakes from the trance he will watch the pocket of the hypnotist. When the hypnotist removes a handkerchief from the pocket, the subject will raise the window. The subject is told that he will not remember the hypnotist's telling him to do this. Aroused from the trance, the subject … carries on a normal conversation, all the while furtively watching the hypnotist's pocket. When the hypnotist in a casual manner removes his handkerchief, the subject feels an impulse to open the window, takes a step in that direction, but hesitates. Unconsciously he mobilizes his wishes to be a reasonable person; so, seeking for a reason for his impulse to open the window, he says, "Isn't it a little stuffy in here?". Having found the needed excuse, he opens the window and feels more comfortable" (Hilgard and Atkinson 1967: 516). I wish to thank Varda Dascal for bringing this example to my attention.

15. It is not my purpose here to offer an elaborate criticism of this model. For further criticism of deep structure explanations in the social sciences, see Unger (1987).

Part II: Applying

Chapter 10

Understanding digressions
A study in conversational coherence

"Is it perfume from a dress
That makes me so digress?"

T. S. Eliot,
"The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"

1. Introduction

A great deal of attention has recently been paid by researchers to the study of various facets of conversational coherence. The centrality of this concern for the understanding of natural discourse has been underlined by W. Labov (1973: 252-253):

> The fundamental problem of discourse analysis is to show how one utterance follows another in a rational, rule-governed manner — in other words, how we understand coherent discourse. We rely upon our intuitions to distinguish coherent from incoherent discourse; for example:
> A: What is your name?
> B: Well, let's say you might have thought you had something from before, but you haven't got it anymore.
> A: I'm going to call you Dean.
> This is an excerpt from a conversation between a doctor and a schizophrenic patient. Our first data in dealing with such a passage will be our intuitive reactions to it, and the first challenge in discourse analysis is to account for our intuitions (as confirmed by the response of participants).

In their attempt to meet the "first challenge in discourse analysis" and to account for intuitions concerning the coherence or incoherence of discourse, researchers have generally recognized that they have to go beyond syntactic and semantic considerations, and incorporate a variety of pragmatic factors into their analyses.

One approach seeks to study the way consecutive utterances in discourse constrain the utterances that follow them, whether in terms of possible con-

tinuations or possible responses. Mohan (1974) takes up Austin's notion of a speech act sequel and studies the constraints placed by an utterance on the ones following it on the level of illocutionary force, defining the notion of an "illocutionary domain" of connected utterances. Dascal (Chapter 2) employs the broader notions of "conversational demand" and "conversational reaction" which integrate constraints on the semantic and pragmatic levels. Thus, an utterance in a discourse may be said to set up a conversational demand which, if properly attended to by the interlocutor, will, to a large extent, constrain his reaction to it in terms of both topic, illocutionary range and, at times, semantic content. Keenan and Schifflein (1976) studied topical relations on the level of discourse, using the notion of "discourse topic" in defining discourse organization. They identify two major types of discourse — "continuous discourse" and "discontinuous discourse." The first type is further divided into discourse containing a "collaborating discourse topic" (a topic that exactly matches that of the immediately preceding utterance) and discourse containing an "incorporating discourse topic" (a topic that takes up an utterance from the "presupposition pool" of the preceding discourse). The second type is divided into discourse containing a "re-introducing discourse topic" which reintroduces a claim and/or discourse topic that has appeared in the discourse history, and discourse containing an "introducing discourse topic" that is in no way related to either the preceding utterances or to any earlier utterances in the discourse history.

Another approach seeks to account for the connectedness of utterances in discourse by formulating the rules which enable conversationalists to perceive and respond to utterances as connected, in spite of the fact that, on the face of it, they seem to violate semantic and pragmatic requirements of relevance. Grice's (1975) conversational maxims, which enable conversationalists to infer "connecting propositions" from the apparently disconnected discourse and the context of utterance, are an example of this approach. So is Searle's (1975b) analysis of indirect speech acts which seeks to specify the rules which enable us to interpret an utterance as carrying an illocutionary force different from the one standardly associated with it.

A third body of research, represented by Schegloff (1968; 1972), Schegloff and Sacks (1973) and Jefferson (1972), focuses on ritual, interactionally oriented speech devices and their sequential organization in conversation, which is characterized by the concept of "conditional relevance", and specifies the conversationally obligatory occurrence of one form after the other in such

sequences as conversational openings and closings or corrective sequences. Nofsinger's work (1975; 1976) is an example of recent attempts to integrate some of the above approaches into a more comprehensive treatment of the elements that contribute to our perception of discourse as connected.

All these studies share a central feature: essentially, they try to account for the relationships obtaining between sequentially ordered utterances in discourse, adjacency pairs (Schegloff) or conversational demand and reaction (Dascal). The assumption that seems to underlie these various approaches is that if each utterance within a conversational sequence is either semantically, topically, pragmatically or conditionally relevant to the utterance directly following or preceding it, the conversational sequence as a whole will be both perceived and judged to be coherent. We do not contest this assumption.[1] However, we do not accept the frequently made complementary assumption (which is also implicit in the example given by Labov, as quoted above) that if no such relevance relation holds for each utterance of a conversational sequence and the one adjoining it, the conversation will be experienced and judged to be incoherent. Van Dijk (1977b) goes further than many of the above mentioned studies in systematically exploring two levels of discourse coherence: *sequential* coherence and *global* coherence. He points out that sequences may be connected without being coherent (as in the example given earlier), suggesting that

> Connection may be a necessary but not a sufficient condition for the acceptability of discourse. Connectedness seems to be a condition on pairs of sentences, but it may be the case that the whole sequence of connections must satisfy specific conditions of 'coherence'. It will be assumed that these conditions are of two types, viz. linear and global.

Global coherence is closely related to the notion of the topic of a discourse which Van Dijk defines in propositional terms as a proposition entailed by the joint set of propositions expressed by the sequence.

As we will indicate in our analysis of digressions, we quite agree with Van Dijk's emphasis on the notion of topic of discourse and its status in the analysis of sequences of language. According to Van Dijk, our linguistic behavior shows that we can say that a discourse is "about" something. That is, we are able to produce other discourses, or parts of discourses, expressing this "aboutness", e.g., in summaries, titles, conclusions or announcements of any form. Indeed, although our approach to the notion of "topic of conversation" utilizes the concept of the phenomenal field of consciousness rather than a

propositional analysis framework, it is possible that our discussion of what we shall refer to as utterance-based digressions could be cast in propositional terms as well. However, despite these partial similarities, or even overlapping, it seems to us that our analysis has a very different point of departure and a very different analytic mode and purpose.

It seems to us that the source of the difference may lie in the fact that we are concerned with conversations while Van Dijk's main concern is with written discourse. He equates the notions of "topic of discourse" and "topic of conversation", realizing that he is making a simplifying assumption. We would like not to make this kind of assumption in analyzing conversational topics. In other words, while the topic of a written discourse can be viewed as a "textual given", conversational topics, it seems to us, must be viewed as socially constructed, and it is to the exploration of this process of social construction and reconstruction that our analysis of utterance-based digressions is geared. In a sense, then, Van Dijk's propositional analysis, if applied to conversations, would be presupposing ours. Furthermore, our emphasis on conversational coherence as experienced by the discourse participants themselves (rather than as analyzed by the researcher) leads us to include in our analysis interaction-based digressions, which, by definition, fall outside any topic-based definition of discourse.

In sum, we extend many current approaches to conversational coherence by going beyond sequential relations between utterances; also, we claim that no textual approach to global coherence can adequately describe the speaker-based constructive process which underlies it, nor can it account for the experienced coherence of other conversational phenomena, such as interaction-based digression, which are outside its scope. We will try to show that, although the mentioned studies of conversational structure have gone a long way towards explicating the notion of discourse coherence, their treatment of conversational "incoherence", which is rarely directly attempted, is much less adequate.

This paper will focus on a very common conversational phenomenon, namely, digressions. As far as we know, this phenomenon has attracted little, if any, research interest. This, it appears, may not be quite accidental, since, if coherence is viewed as the product of relevance relations between sequential utterances, conversational digressions cannot but be considered as disruptive to conversational coherence. What marks a digression is precisely the fact that it is not directly related, syntactically, semantically and even "pragmatically",

to the main conversational contribution of its adjacent utterances. In short, a digression does not fit in the "mainstream of conversation"; it breaks the pattern that consists in each utterance adequately "responding" to the preceding one, a pattern that seems to characterize any non-digressive stretch of conversation. Now, if we could say that conversations containing digressions are indeed experienced as incoherent, there would be no problem, and no revision would be called for in our notions of conversational coherence and incoherence so as to make them compatible with the existence of digressions. Nevertheless, our intuitions, on which we must rely to distinguish coherent from incoherent discourse, refuse to accept such a judgment. It seems to us that conversations containing digressions of various types (which we will try to distinguish below) are experienced by conversational partners as coherent events, not as verbal patchworks.

Indeed, digressions are not rare conversational incidents; they permeate all conversations. Nor do they consist of marginal residual conversational material — they have definite roles to play both in regulating and sustaining the conversation and in contributing substantively to it. In other words, digressions may be a puzzle if considered from a purely textual or even from an actional (illocutionary) perspective, but they make a great deal of sense if considered from a broader, interactional point of view. In what follows, a description and analysis of conversational digressions is proposed, in which both the distinction and interaction of the textual and interactional levels of analysis is put to use.

2. Digressions and topical relevance

Keenan and Schifflein's (1976) discussion of topic as a discourse notion provides a starting point for a structural (formal) analysis of conversational digressions in terms of the topic/comment relations holding between sequential utterances in a discourse. Yet, as will be shown, their framework is insufficient for a satisfactory account of digressions, and hence, of conversational coherence as well. They employ the notions of "discontinuous discourse" and "reintroducing topic", which can be used in a preliminary formal definition of digressions. Thus, in their terms, a digression would be a portion of the conversation, which is not topically related to the conversational material preceding nor to the material following it, whereas the latter are topically

related to each other. In short, in a digression the original topic is dropped and a new topic introduced; this is, in turn, dropped and replaced by the original topic, which is then reintroduced. Thus, a digression can be characterized by two successive topical shifts, involving the same two topics.

There is no doubt that topical discontinuity of this kind plays some role in a proper characterization of conversational digressions. The question is: what role, precisely? We shall argue that the notion of topic used by Keenan and Schifflein, a notion borrowed from the strictly linguistic work of the Prague school, has only a very limited role to play in the full story of the structure, function and use of digressions in conversations. The reason for this is simply that topic as defined in terms of syntactic/semantic features of sentences is only one among many components of the topics in the sense of "subject matter" of a conversation. The "topic" in this broader sense depends not only upon the structure of the sentences employed in the conversation and their meanings, but also upon such contextual factors as the environment where the conversation takes place, the background of the participants, the events or stimuli that are currently attended to by them, etc. Intuitively, it is with respect to some broader notion of "topic" of this kind that digressions are identified as such. The narrower notion of topic is important too, since it is the detection of topical discontinuity (in the narrower sense) that often triggers the mechanism for the identification of a digression (very much like the way in which the detection of semantic irrelevance triggers the search for an implicature (cf. Chapter 2). But it must be inserted within a more comprehensive framework. (In terms of the framework introduced in Chapter 8, such narrowly defined topical discontinuities might be viewed as *cues* indicating that a digression occurs.).

A quite different concept of "topicality" is provided by the phenomenological work of Alfred Schutz (1970). He distinguishes different types of relevance, among them "topical relevance", which is defined as that form of relevance by virtue of which something is interpreted as problematic in the midst of the unstructured field of unproblematic familiarity, thus subdividing the field of consciousness into theme and horizon.

A first attempt to apply this notion to conversations might run as follows. In a communicative exchange, the emergent definition of the situation would have to include a consensual structuring of the "field of unproblematic familiarity" into theme and horizon, by the participants in the exchange. What is thematic or "problematic" for all participants is a possible

candidate for a "conversational topic". The required structuring can be generated either by some utterance (which calls attention to a "problem") or by some other event in the environment. Obviously, a change in the definition of the situation for any of the participants may lead to a shift in conversational topic for him. Such a shift may, in turn, lead either to a complete abandonment of the original topic, in which case we will be facing a "conversational switch", or else it may be followed by a return to the original topic, in which case we have a digression.

One question that arises is whether we can formulate the conditions under which a topical shift triggered by some change in the definition of the situation is finally perceived either as a conversational switch or as a digression. And even more fundamentally, we may ask under what conditions a change in the definition of the situation triggers a topical shift at all. For, clearly, the definition of the situation in a communicative encounter is an emergent and dynamic process, and not every change in it triggers a shift in conversational topic. In particular, the gradual thematic changes introduced via the sequence of utterances, by the "normal" interplay of (linguistic) topics and comments should not be construed as triggering digressions. We hope to provide at least a partial answer to these questions in the course of this paper. Let us now explore the above suggestions a little further.

Topicality, we have seen, is a function of "problematicity" in the sense of salience with respect to a given background. But the topic does not remain constant. Each utterance, in the course of a conversation, raises a new "topic", in this sense, in so far as it poses a new "problem" for the hearer or for the speaker himself: it requires a response from the hearer if it is an "end-of-turn" utterance, or else it requires a "continuation" on the part of the speaker.[2] Each topic, however, carries along with it a set of "topical relevances" which defines (albeit loosely) the set of possible solutions for the problem it poses. Whenever a response or continuation-utterance belongs to such a set, i.e., satisfies some of the conditions of topical relevance, the conversation is felt to proceed within the same "topic". Successive utterances which respect the principle of alternations of (linguistic) topic and comment, satisfy this condition. Hence, no "digression" is detected in them. A digression requires a "bigger" departure from the current topic — one that implies perhaps replacement of the current set of topical relevances by an altogether different one.

Schank addresses the problem of normal or "permissible" conversational shifts in terms of local topics of sequential utterances in a conversation. His general point is that: "In a conversation it is not appropriate to respond to sentences with anything that comes to mind. There are specific rules that govern the selection of responses. Now it is clear that such rules cannot be overly prescriptive. The rules cannot go so far as to select one and only one response for a given input [...] So, there exists no 'correct' response to input sentences. But, there certainly do exist inappropriate (or 'incorrect') responses" (Schank 1977:442). He rejects the notion of the "topic of a sentence" and suggests that a more fruitful way to approach the question of discourse continuity is by formulating the rules for "permissible" topic shifts. Thus, "to talk about the topic of (70') is to miss the point. Rather, we should be talking about the potential topics that (70') points to for future responses. That is, a sentence said in response to an input must at the same time stick to the topic and introduce potential new topics, thus sticking and shifting at the same time" (1977:425). Schank introduces two other notions of a more global nature: *supertopic* and *metatopic*. A supertopic is an immediately generalizable statement of which the local topics are sub-kinds (e.g., the topic "buying cars" is an immediate generalization of "John bought a car yesterday" and "The last car I bought gave me a lot of trouble"). A metatopic is "a comment that can be inferred from the interaction of two conceptualizations" (1977:426); an example would be one of the speaker's beliefs brought up by a sentence.

Schank proposes sets of rules for the "syntax of conversation", i.e., rules for topic shift, or rules for what can follow what in a conversation, given the fact that perfectly acceptable conversational responses often transform the local topic of conversation in one way or another. These rules are based on Conversational Associational Categories, which represent the possible paths that can emanate from an object or action concept in memory. For example, given an input sentence of the form "T was Z-ing his Y the other day" and assuming the continuation is an object-based one, the permissible conversational shifts may relate to where the object came from, its function, enablement (availability), habits associated with its use, associated objects, results of using it, problems its possession or use involves, and possibly more. A further set of rules will determine which of a given set of possible responses is most appropriate in a particular context. Thus, the various conversational and associational categories have different interest values in different cultures and

in different specific contexts within a culture, and these would determine the "ranking" of the "permissible" continuation in terms of their appropriateness.

Despite differences in terminology and overall frame-of-reference (basically, an emphasis on the "message" rather than the "speaker"), it seems to us that Schank's treatment in effect can be reinterpreted in terms of the notions of "topic" of conversation and "system of relevance" we have presented in phenomenological terms. It certainly points to a fruitful way of systematizing and specifying what these notions suggest.

Thus, the notion of "discontinuous" discourse is itself problematic, as it has to be considered against the background of ongoing "permissible" topical shifts and not against the background of a topically homogeneous conversation. This does not really affect our formal definition of digressions: we can still define a digressional shift in conversational topic as one to which topic-shifting rules of the type proposed by Schank do not apply. (In our analysis, both supertopic and metatopic shifts are considered to be somewhat digressional.) The fact that we usually recognize digressional shifts in topic (as opposed to non-digressional ones) indicates that "permissible" topical shifts are indeed rule-governed. However, it also points to the fruitfulness of considering topically related digressions as a matter of degree rather than an all or none issue, where the degree of digressionality would depend both on whether the response follows a "syntactically" permissible conversational rule and, in case it does, on the ranking it has in terms of its "interest value" in the given context.

Another aspect of topicality which Schutz's analysis brings to light and which might help to conceptualize what was just said is his discussion of interrupted activities:

> If we interrupt our ongoing activity a_1, and turn to the activity a_2, reverting to a_1, after having finished a_2, we replace the theme a_1, and the topical relevance attached thereto, by the theme a_2, and its topical relevances a_2, thus far in the margin of the field of consciousness is now brought into focus, while a_1 is relegated to the margin. But it is so relegated as a neutralized topic with all its attendant relevances: it is put off, deferred in its full topical relevance but not released from the grip.
>
> Having a_2 in the center of my thematic field, with its full topical relevance, I nevertheless have a_1, in the margin as a topic in its own right, but now as a temporarily suspended one, a topic put in brackets, but carrying along its full relevance structure in an inactive, neutralized mode. We may call such a topic "marginal" and the relevances attached to it marginal relevances (Schutz 1970: 116).

In order to illustrate how this distinction might be applied to conversations, consider the following example:

> A is explaining to B a certain view on the nature of knowledge. After stating the view, he presents an example of a justified claim to knowledge, namely "John knows that it is raining in Honolulu."
> *Case 1*
> B: On what grounds can he be said to know that?
> *Case 2*
> B: By the way, for how long has it been raining in Honolulu?

In the context of the conversation, the subject-matter being "theory of knowledge", the set of topical relevances associated with it includes "grounds for knowledge claims", "criteria for the assessment of knowledge", "examples of knowledge claims", and so on. Hence, B's reply in case 1 is "topically relevant" (since it fits in the set of topical relevances) and is not perceived as a digression. A's example, however, carries with it its own set of relevances, which include "duration of the rain", "effects on Honolulu's population and economy", "B's travel plans to Honolulu", and so on. This set is present, to be sure, but it is marginal with respect to the conversational subject so far. With B's reply in case 2, the marginal suddenly becomes central, and the previous subject is relegated to a marginal position together with its own set of relevances which still remains "in the grip" of the interlocutors. We conjecture that it is this shift, syntactically marked by the "By the way" operator, that underlies the perception of B's reply in Case 2 as the beginning of a potential digression.[3] A can, of course, either go along with the digression, adopting the new set of relevances, or call B to order, back to the main topic, or else he can opt out of the conversation altogether.

Thus, digressions may be viewed as a communicative garden-variety of interrupted activities. Viewed from this point of view, it becomes clear that what is shifted in a digression is not the linguistic "topic" narrowly defined (as in Keenan and Schifflein), but rather the theme together with the whole set of topical relevances associated with it. Such a broader unit is a much better approximation for playing the role of a "conversational topic". For one thing, it allows stretches of conversation to be "on the same topic", in spite of the normal changes in the linguistically defined topics of its utterances, provided the conversational contributions of these utterances fit into the same "struc-

ture of topical relevances". Only when one such structure is clearly abandoned and replaced by another can we speak properly of a digression.

Furthermore, Schutz's remarks call attention to the fact that, at any given moment, the apparent ongoing activity (e.g., conversation) is only the tip of the iceberg, which involves in fact a complex set of relationships between several layers of the field of consciousness or attention of the conversation partners. This whole mass has, so to speak, a considerable inertia. In order to make it deviate from its actual course, some "force" must be applied to it, according to some set of laws. For example, the requirement that the participants in a conversation keep the original topic "in their grip" excludes the possibility of regarding digressions as a whimsical, non-consensual activity on the part of one of the discourse participants. Moreover, a speaker who wishes to digress cannot just shift the topic of conversation, and later signal to his hearers that what he had in mind was a digression by eventually reintroducing the original topic. By that time the hearer may have pushed the original topic far back into the horizon of his field of consciousness, rather than keeping it in a state of "marginal relevance" within his grip. Not surprisingly, then, digressions are both introduced and rounded off by a variety of "bracketing" devices. This is required in order to keep the set of relations just mentioned within the bounds of a relatively stable consensual basis for all the partners. In this way, a digression is a conversational "achievement" in the same sense that a smooth conversational opening or ending is (see Schegloff 1968; Schegloff and Sacks 1973).

In sum, a consideration of the various types of relevance suggested by Schutz might lead to an account of properties of digression that a purely sequential narrow approach would leave unexplained. As we shall illustrate in what follows, these properties are largely responsible for the functional potential of conversational digressions.

3. Types of digression

Although we believe there are no clearcut borders in the continuum that extends from "legitimate" (non-digressional) topic shifts, through several kinds of digressions, to sheer interruptions and divagations, we think the three types of digression described below have quite interesting distinctive

characteristics, so that they deserve to figure as the core of a classification for digressions.

The primary distinctions we will draw in our attempt to classify digressions, and to account for their occurrence, are those between utterance-based digressions, interaction-based digressions and insertion sequences. Utterance-based digressions are characterized by the fact that some kind of "content" relation holds between the mainstream utterances and the digressional ones. Interaction-based digressions exhibit no such relations. Insertion sequences, in our use of the term, refer to a large variety of corrective and clarifying speech acts. They have an intermediary standing between utterance-based and interaction-based digressions, since, on the one hand, they constitute an immediate response to the conversational material preceding them (and are, therefore, more closely related to it than interaction-based digressions), while, on the other hand, they do not address the "point" of the previous discourse and therefore cannot be considered "topically relevant".

At this stage, we are able to produce only a small set of examples of digressions of these three types, and we believe that a great deal of empirical research is still warranted. However, we hope to provide a tentative framework into which many examples as well as additional types can be fitted.

3.1 Consider again the example discussed above (on the theory of knowledge). Suppose now B's reply is as follows:

> *Case 3*
> B: This reminds me of the umbrella I forgot in your car. Excuse me; please proceed.

As in case 2, but perhaps more clearly so, B shifts the conversation momentarily to another topic, belonging to the set of relevances of "rain", an item which indeed figures in the previous utterance, but which is very remote from its main purport.

This is a clear case of an utterance-based digression. Notice that the relation obtaining between the mainstream utterance and the digressional one that, for lack of a better term, we dubbed a "content" relation, need not be semantical (or semantic-like) as in the above example. Not only any other kind of "association" evoked by the previous utterance would do, as a bridge to a digression of this kind (e.g., A preparing the salad dressing: Please pass the blue cheese; B: Blue is the color of the sky, my darling, Blue are your eyes, my

love. By the way, didn't you go to the oculist lately? The cheese is on the table next to you!), but the connection may also be "pragmatic" in nature:

> A: Where is the cheese?
> B: Have you lost your glasses?
> A: Ah! By the way, have you read that paper on non-epistemic seeing I lent to you last week?

Here the digression is based on the *implicature* ("You have problems with your vision") of B's utterance rather than on any detail of the utterance itself.[5]

In this kind of digression, the alternative set of relevances, which is displaced from its marginal position into a central one, is picked out of the marginal relevances associated in some way or another with the preceding utterance(s). Since it is not always easy to distinguish the main from the marginal sets of relevances, given the fact that each one of these sets is itself loosely ordered, so that some of its relevances are more "central" than others, there is some difficulty in distinguishing digressions of this type from shifts, within a topic, to non-central relevances. Thus, there is a whole range of cases in which, although certain utterances are relevant to the topic, and even to the main "point" of the conversation, they are perceived as somewhat digressional. Among these cases, we might mention those in which relations of analogy, substantiation, instantiation, generalization, etc., obtain between the mainstream and the "digressional" utterances. The fact is that such expansions of a topic (by the way, each of them has a fairly specific type of introducing operator, e.g., "like ...") are of course relevant to it, but only rather marginally, in the sense that they are not "required" (unless specifically requested, of course) in the sense that an answer is required by a question. They are thus at first digressive, but they finally end up by becoming natural additions to the topic. Perhaps this type of "quasi-digression" might be viewed as an example of "extended" *intrinsic* relevance (as opposed to external or imposed relevance), as suggested by the following remarks of Schutz (1970: 29):

> We may voluntarily structure a field into thematic kernel and horizontal background ... this has two class subdivisions, the first consists of the voluntary replacing of one theme of thought with another by gradually superimposing one on the other — i.e., by enlarging or deepening the prevailing theme ... In the first case the original theme has been retained, and the changed thematic kernel remains related to what was thematic up to that point. To be sure, what was just now horizontal has become thematic but not in the sense of a new theme. It remains connected with the former theme (which I still have in my grip) but it

> has been expanded in such a way that elements which were formerly horizontal and are now thematic have become intrinsic to the theme ...

We may perhaps further clarify the sense of partial connectedness of these "quasi-digressions" by referring to the notion of "conversational demand" and "conversational reaction", as formulated in Chapter 2. One important property they display is that they only become *real* digressions if the following utterances take up the example (or analogy, generalization, reason, etc.) as a theme to elaborate upon (cf. Case 2 in the example above). In other words, the quasi-digressional condition is preserved if the utterances in question are viewed as a partial conversational reaction to previous conversational material, which do not however pose a conversational demand of its own for the conversational material to follow. This double condition explains both the truncating effect (since normally each utterance *does* pose a demand which the ensuing conversation has to satisfy) and the continuity effect (since after all they are at least a partially adequate reaction to the previous demand) of these "quasi-digressions". They are experienced as somehow related to the mainstream topic, but not as a full-fledged part of the thematic development.

It seems that both utterance-based digression and quasi-digressions of the types mentioned make use of similar "opening bracket devices", e.g., *It reminds me of the story about the man who ...*, where the story about the man elaborates some marginal point in the previous conversational material, and is not expected to be picked up for further elaboration. Or, similarly, the expression *It's not like the man who ...*, which introduces a digression with a contrastive function. In abstract discussions, which make a lot of use of general terms, an anecdote which functions as an example — whether explicitly or implicitly — is experienced as somewhat digressional. Likewise, in an anecdotal exchange, a generalized statement (e.g., "Driving has become really dangerous" in response to a chain of anecdotes relating specific examples of near-accidents) has a similar digressional standing. Digressions of the utterance-based type tend to take the form of self-contained stories, anecdotes or jokes, which are neatly rounded off once the "point" has been made and do not substantially disrupt the main conversational flow.

We could further distinguish between two types of utterance-based digressions: in one case the speaker is "carried away" by his private, associative thread of thought, triggered by items which are motivationally relevant to him, but not necessarily to the hearer. He follows this thread, as it were, out of curiosity, not really knowing where it would lead and how his digression is

related to the conversational topic, if at all. An example of this is a lecturer who is tracked into a sideline and after a while asks: "How did I get to talk about this?". In this case the hearer is completely in the dark: not only doesn't he know what the digressional material is going to be, he doesn't even have a rough idea how it is going to be related to the conversational mainstream; he cannot appeal to any part of the system of relevance which attends the conversational theme to make sense of the digressional material.

Compare this to the other type of utterance-based digression, which is used as a kind of indirect commentary on the mainstream conversational topic: in this case the speaker knows exactly what his purpose in digressing is and sooner or later he suggests to the hearer what part of the mainstream topic the digression was designed to highlight. In this case, the hearer does not lose his conversational orientation as he does in the former case. A typical example of this type of digression is what C. Perri calls the allusion-joke, which she describes as follows:

> In ordinary language conversational contexts in which language is being used seriously, there frequently occur, nevertheless, suspensions of serious usage — as in joking. The joker uses force indicators to signal his imminent suspension of serious language: a change in voice intonation, or certain stock opening phrases "that reminds me of the story", "I heard a good one today" ... In such contexts, the allusion-joke is not a deviant way of referring but one of the mechanisms of wit expected by the audience of the speech act of joking, ... an analysis of which would render its constitutive rules explicit (1978:303).

Perri extends her analysis of literary allusions to this type of digression. From our point of view, it is interesting to note that allusion jokes are in fact the least "digressional" of utterance-based digressions we can think of: they are indirect elaborations of the main conversational theme and do not introduce a completely new set of relevances. It seems that what makes them "digressional" in spite of this is precisely that suspension of seriousness Perri mentions, i.e., the pragmatic "leap" from serious to non-serious talk. So that, even before the hearer knows what the joke is about, he knows it is going to be a joke due to the force indicators employed by the speaker, and can readily locate it within the conversational frame.

Our hunch is that associative digressions would be experienced as more disturbing and more difficult to process than the indirect-comment type, since in the first case the hearer is even less of a partner in the construction of conversational meanings.

Another question to ask about comment-type digressions which make some indirect reference to the main conversational theme is why this indirectness at all? What function does it have? What does it achieve that a direct elaboration of the theme would not achieve? One function could be that of maintaining the level of interest, and we would conjecture that the more compact and patterned the conversation the more likely are digressions to be brought in. On the other hand, the more information-loaded a conversation the more burdensome is the sideline information added by digressions. Thus, conversationalists have a difficult balance to maintain: the balance between relationship-based considerations which would advocate keeping up the interest and, hence, the involvement-level of hearers, and the cognitive constraints involved in keeping the information-load within manageable proportions. Other reasons for the indirectness may be related to the general phenomenon of face-preserving politeness, which often takes the form of indirectness in language use. We would expect, then, that non-complimentary comments would be more likely to be expressed indirectly than complimentary ones. Indeed, jokes are often at somebody's expense. A full understanding of the indirectness involved in the use of digressions requires an examination of the phenomenon of indirectness in language use in general. The above remarks only point to some directions of inquiry.

3.2 Another type of digression is evidenced in various examples of corrective sequences or sequences having a clarification function. The former have been studied under the heading of "side sequences" by Jefferson (1972), and the latter under the heading of "insertion sequences" by Schegloff (1972). Both are hearer-based, in the sense that they are a response to a previously, not fully accepted, or not fully understood utterance.[6] What distinguishes this type of digression from the conversational material in which it is embedded is that it performs a sort of meta-linguistic or meta-conversational function, and therefore marks a leap in the conversational level. It is experienced as a halt in the conversational flow. The extent to which such a halt would be jarring to the smooth and orderly flow of the conversation would depend, it seems to us, on what aspect of the previous utterances happens to be the object of the corrective or clarifying remark. It seems that the more content-based the corrective digression is (cf. correction of some statement or of a presupposition vs. correction of pronunciation) the less jarring it is to the conversational flow and the less we experience it as a digression. Not all corrective speech acts are

digressional: in the context of an argument, for example, they may be part of the central conversational activity. The view of corrective and clarifying digressions we are putting forth thus involves a gradation of cases. We should talk, in fact, of degrees of digressionality.[7] Consider the following examples:

(1) A: You are coming with us tomorrow, aren't you?
B: Are you just asking or inviting me?
A: I'm inviting you.
B: O.K. then I'll come.

(2) A: I read an article about the American President, Eisemhoover.
B: You mean Eisenhower.
A: Yeah. It was very interesting ....

(3) A: Even the president of the company, Robertson, was against these measures.
B: You mean the former president.
A: Yeah, but the same problem existed in his time.

(4) A: John and I met when we were both students in Cambridge.
B: I didn't realize you had studied abroad.
A: No, I mean Cambridge, Massachusetts.

(5) A: Tom asked me yesterday if it's true that the moon is made of cheese.
B: It's like the little boy who thought that white cows gave milk and brown cows gave coffee.
A: Kids get such funny ideas.

(6) A: I think we should protest against the Government's new policy.
B: But this is not the issue. We are here to clarify our own social program.
A: I think it is the issue.
B: You are sidetracking the whole discussion.

In (1) B is trying to clarify the illocutionary force of A's previous utterance before he responds to it. In (2) B merely corrects a pronunciation error by A, and since it has no bearing on A's general point, he takes it in his stride and goes on to say what was in his mind. In (3) the correction of "president" to "former president" could be relevant to A's argument and A therefore must relate to it in greater detail in his subsequent utterance. In (4) B makes a remark which is marginal to A's conversational point, reflecting B's "updat-

ing" of his background information about A, rather than make a direct contribution to the conversational topic. It is digressional topic-wise but not so much situation-wise. (5) is an example of an anecdotal exchange followed by a generalized statement that in itself makes no contribution in terms of the information it conveys, but functions so as to "wrap up" the conversation making explicit the implicit topic of A's and B' statements. (6) is an example of a corrective sequence introduced by "but" in which the relevance of A's conversational contribution is questioned. Other corrective "but" sequences were discussed in Chapter 6.

Notice the difference between (4) and possible other responses to the first initial utterance:

A: John and I met when we were both students in Cambridge.
B1: I have never been to Cambridge.
B2: A propos Cambridge, I believe they hired a new football coach last week.

As opposed to B, B1 and B2 both assume that there is no identification problem involved. Intuitively, it seems to us that B2 is more digressional than B1, and B1 more so than B in (4). This seems to be related to our sense of "relevance" for non-topically related utterances. The least digressional would be those that function so as to clarify the content, form or purpose of the utterance itself; a little more digressional are the ones that involve some clarification concerning the conversational partners. Utterance B in (4) makes reference both to the speaker of A and to his utterance, and is therefore less digressional than would be a response by B like: "I didn't know you had been a university student", which does not seek to clarify A's utterance in itself but some speaker-related presupposition in it. B1 as a response to A is still more digressional, but seems to be less so than B2 since, though both are take-offs from A's utterance, and as such are not topically related to it, B1 is speaker-related (B is relating himself to some marginal element of A's utterance) whereas B2 is not even that.

In any case, these digressions seem to be explained by the fact that, although a set of meta-linguistic relevances is always available to speaker and hearer, it is always (except perhaps in poetry) marginal vis-à-vis the other uses of language. Hence, a shift to this set of relevances is perceived as a major divergence from the set of topical relevances. Clearly, semantic aspects, although meta-linguistic, when directly handled, are usually closer to the "point" conveyed, and are thus felt to be less digressional than other aspects.

To be sure, if the theme is phonetics or if the conversation involves a piece of poetry, then an allusion to phonological properties of the words used may be perceived as less digressional than it usually is.

3.3. Consider now to the other main subtype of digression, which we labeled interaction-based digression. In choosing this label we sought to underline the fact that, although the utterances in these digressions are not related in any way to the topics of the conversations in which they are embedded, these digressions are not dysfunctional to the overall smoothness of the conversation as may seem to be the case at first sight. The reason for this impression is that these digressions are often triggered by some "noise" or distracting element in the immediate environment, such as the acknowledged arrival of a new person, a change in weather, etc. In other words, these digressions are adequate responses to some externally imposed change in the definition of the situation, as opposed to the utterance-based ones, which are intrinsically related to the mainstream utterances. However, the mere characterization of these digressions as externally triggered will not do: what about a digression in which the speaker comments about his toothache, or one in which he is suddenly reminded of some matter completely unrelated to what has previously been said? Can these, too, be considered external? External to what? Indeed, what do these digressions share that makes us think of them as belonging together? And, again, we must ask in this particular case as we did more generally before: how can we account for the fact that some "distracting elements" trigger digressions while others do not? How come some redefinitions of the situation are responded to while others are not?

Consider the example of Chapter 2 about an outdoor conversation between Socrates and Meno potentially interrupted by rain. It is argued there that if neither conversant were to remark about the rain (namely, "digress") they would be implying that the conversation is very important to them. So our original question is complicated still further: we have to ask not only how rainy or noisy it has to become for conversational partners to acknowledge the distracting factor by way of a digression, but also at what point their failure to make such an acknowledgement would give rise to an implicature concerning their involvement in the conversation (see note 5). Again, this seems to be a matter of degree: a few drops of rain may be simply ignored, as may be a pleasant background tune or a mild toothache. How do we go about generalizing from here? What is the shared element about degrees of noise, cold, ache,

etc., which guides conversationalists in their use of digressions and in the implicatures they draw from a failure to use them?

Furthermore, we could actually question the conversational justifiability of mentioning an item whose existence is obviously noted by all the discourse participants since such a comment certainly does not have an informative value; and as Leech says, "it appears to be a general principle of conversation that a speaker/writer does not bother to describe aspects of the extra-linguistic situation which are obvious to himself and to the addressee" (1974: 351). Thus, viewed from the point of view of conversational continuity, these digressions seem to be disruptive; viewed from the standpoint of their informative value, they seem to be utterly redundant and unwarranted. And yet, we stand by our original statement that the conversations in which they are embedded are experienced as coherent events. This leads us to the conclusion that they function on a different conversational dimension.

It seems to us that the reason all these distracting factors give rise to digressions is that they are *interpreted as threatening the encounter itself*; that is, as threatening the conversationalists' involvement in the interaction (cf. Chapter 7). For this reason, it is usually the current speaker that initiates the digression, so that digressions are usually contained in one and the same speaker-turn. Moreover, a speaker-initiated digression does not violate any politeness rules. It is heard as an attempt to incorporate the disturbing material into the conversational encounter so as to *enhance its smoothness,* by reaffirming the availability of the audience (the speaker has no doubts about his own involvement in the conversation, it is the hearer's involvement that he must make sure of).

A hearer-initiated digression, on the other hand, may sound like a rebuff to the speaker for having overestimated the hearer's involvement in the conversation. The correctness of this line of thought is further supported by the previously mentioned observation that the failure to comment on an obviously distracting factor, is interpreted as an implicature concerning the conversationalists' involvement in the encounter. Thus, what seems to be at issue here is not the explicit, verbally encoded, dimension of conversations but the social, consensual, implicit dimension, which supports the encounter itself. This is what makes digressions of this type interactionally functional.

We might go further in our queries and ask what kinds of distracting factors are likely to trigger digressions. We can clarify this point by turning to another type of relevance treated by Schutz: motivational relevance. A topi-

cally relevant item may be motivationally relevant for one person and not for the other. It will be motivationally relevant when the outcome of a person's interpretative decision concerning the item is going to determine his future action. We can say, then, that any distracting factor which is interpreted by the speaker as potentially motivationally relevant to the hearer, in the sense that it makes a claim on the hearer's subsequent actions (and, perhaps draws him away from the encounter), is perceived as affecting the interaction, and tends to be incorporated into the conversation by means of a digression. By explicitly mentioning the implicit threat to the interaction, the participants establish it as a negotiable element of a conversational transaction. They indicate that they do not consider it completely disruptive by using a digression rather than terminating the encounter. The distracting element may thus become the source of *a joint response*: Meno and Socrates may decide to look for a sheltered area to continue their conversation.

Utterance and interaction-based digressions differ in the assumptions they make with respect to the shared knowledge of the conversationalists. We can describe the difference in terms of A-events (speaker events), B-events (hearer events) and AB-events as in Labov (1973). Interaction-based digressions are triggered by AB-events: both speaker and hearer are aware of the distracting element, and it is the one who interprets it as motivationally relevant that decides to make a digression. These digressions are often accompanied by a gesture or other nonverbal attention-drawing mechanisms rather than linguistic bracketing devices — which is easily explainable by the fact that they are dependent on the immediate context. Notice that this is true of distractors such as a toothache, which is obviously an A-event, medically speaking, and yet, in our analysis of digression, it should be considered an AB-event, since for the speaker's toothache to become the subject matter of a digression it must be perceived by both interlocutors to function as an implicit threat to the interaction. In fact, toothache-type digressions tend to be apologetic, and tend to come as a response to inquisitive looks, if not direct enquiries. As a matter of fact, it would be the inquisitive look that would initiate the digression and not the toothache complaint itself. So the AB-event that triggers this type of digression is the perceived distraction, uneasiness, outright lack of involvement, etc., of one of the discourse participants.

As for insertion sequences and utterance-based digressions, they result from different combinations of A- and B-events. In each case it is an A-event (misinterpretations of previous discourse or associations evoked by a certain

word) that triggers the digression. But such events are, in turn, a function of previous discourse, i.e., they are, in some measure, also B-events. Notice, however, that they are not AB-events, since they are not *shared* by the different individuals, A and B, but rather are the result of the double function of hearer and speaker performed by the same individual. Hence, the almost obligatory need of digression-opening devices in these cases.

The question arises whether these three types of digression can be described in a unified way. One way that suggests itself concerns the "communicative success" or "interactional smoothness" of an encounter. Interaction-based digressions support the very possibility of an encounter by incorporating potential threats to it, and are therefore concerned with the most basic interactional condition. Insertion sequences are concerned with validating and establishing the consensus as to the content of the interaction, taking its interactional possibility for granted. Utterance-based digressions introduce changes in the topic, taking for granted both the possibility of the interaction and a consensus regarding its main content. If this hierarchal pattern is correct, we would also predict some pattern of priority in using digressions: e.g., if A says something and B has not quite understood it because of the interference of some highly audible noise, we would predict that B would first of all make reference to the noise, regarding it as threatening to the continuation of the interaction, and only then proceed to clarify for himself whatever it was he missed out in A's remark. Similarly, when a speaker is confronted by a situation in which he has to give priority to either an utterance-based or an interaction-based digression, he is more likely, we believe, to reaffirm the interactional continuity by means of the latter and then eventually proceed to introduce changes in the topical development by means of the former.

Another (compatible with the above) way of unifying the description would make use of the different types of relevance introduced in our discussion. All digressions involve a change in relevance-set. Utterance-based digressions replace conversationally topical relevances by linguistically-based relevances, available but marginal, so far; insertion sequences replace them by metalinguistic relevances. And interaction-based digressions replace conversationally topical relevances by non-conversational ones, which become motivational for at least one of the participants in the conversation.

4. Types of conversation, digression, and episodic structure

In what follows, some possible applications and expansions of the proposed typology will be briefly pointed out. We have several times mentioned the fact that we experience conversations containing digressions in coherent events. Up to this point we have focused our attention on considerations of coherence, but it seems to us that our assumption that conversations are well-defined unitary speech events deserves further comment. The first point to be made concerns the fact that talk-exchanges have some "global" properties. As Schlesinger (1974: 109-110) pointed out, the notion of a discussion, for instance, cannot be reduced to the sum total of the utterances that make it up:

> There is more to a verbal interchange than the sum-total of its individual units, just as there is more to a sentence than the sum-total of its constituent words ... A discussion as a whole is often stated to have certain properties. We may say that it was confused, wandered off the point, etc. ... and such (usually negative evaluative) judgments obviously do not apply to any single statement made by a discussant but to the structure of the relationships between these statements. What is needed is to explicate more fully various intuitive concepts by which discussions are characterized in everyday terms.

The fact that we characterize verbal interchanges in this global manner is hardly surprising: in fact, these global distinctions are lexically encoded in many languages. It is interesting to note that the notion of "topic" figures prominently in many of these distinctions. It is reported that, among the Haya, this notion plays a central role in the characterization of both literal and metaphorical speech events (Seitel 1974). In English one speaks about "discussions" when a verbal interchange is perceived by participants to have a well-defined topic; one speaks about "chats" where no such well-defined topic exists, and "conversations" seem to be neutral with respect to topic-definiteness. Verbal interchanges not only have non-reducible properties; the perception of the verbal interchange as either a discussion or a chat will constrain the types of properties that can be attributed to these talk-exchanges: thus we may say of a discussion that it was "loose-ended" or "to the point", but we cannot say this of a chat. The interest of this observation for our purpose lies in the fact that we can, similarly, say, "We had a good discussion, but everybody kept digressing all the time". That is to say, the very possibility of a digression hinges on the way conversationalists perceive the talk-exchange in terms of its topical definiteness.

These more "global" aspects of verbal interchanges are blurred in studies of conversational coherence, which rely heavily on the sequential concatenation of utterances in discourse. A recently developed model by Frentz and Farrell (1976: 339) gives due prominence to the notion of a conversational unit, on the one hand, while retaining the insights of concatenate models on the other. They define three central concepts: "symbolic acts" which are "verbal and/or nonverbal utterances which express intentionality", "episodes" which are "rule-conforming sequences of symbolic acts generated by two or more actors who are collectively oriented towards emergent goals", and "encounters" which are "points of contact" among conscious human actors, and involve a consensual definition of a situation in which an episode is enacted. The central concept for our analysis of digressions is that of an episode. Its structure is defined by four "imperatives", namely: the initiation imperative, which establishes the mutual "availability" of actors for interaction; the definition imperative, in which the general type of interaction to be enacted is consensually established; the rule-confirmation imperative, in which the encounter rules are confirmed, qualified, etc.; the strategic development imperative, in which "actors make communicative choices which are guided by the collective emergent goal(s) of each episode, and the previous imperative is either accomplished, abandoned, or redefined".

In the first part of this section we asked what type of episode can contain digressions at all, and noted some constraints in terms of the topical definition of verbal interchanges. Having been presented with a model of the internal structure of episodes, it is natural for us to ask whether there exist any constraints on the occurrence of types of digression at various stages of an episodic unfolding. A constraint of this type, which comes readily to mind, concerns utterance-based digressions: obviously, they cannot occur before the strategic development phase, when a discourse topic is established. Interaction-based functional digressions can occur anywhere after the initiation phase, i.e., after the "availability" of the participants has been established. The rule-confirmation imperative seems to be made explicit by digressions of the "insertion sequence" type. It would be no doubt fruitful to pursue further this type of reasoning.

5. Digressions and rules of politeness

We have noted already one "politeness factor" about digressions; namely, that it is both more common and more polite for the current speaker to initiate an interaction-based digression than it is for the hearer to do so. The reason for this difference is that the current speaker has a straightforward reason for doing so, namely, to ascertain the hearer's "availability", while the hearer who uses a digression in a similar situation cannot claim to have such a reason. Hence, the same digression when initiated by the hearer has, or at least may have, an unpleasant overtone, implying that the speaker has wrongly estimated the hearer's involvement in the conversation vis-à-vis the distracting element that interfered with it.

There is, however, a more general point to be made concerning digressions and politeness. When conversationalists belong to clear-cut hierarchically ordered positions (e.g., student-professor, employer-employee, etc.) it is observed that the person with the higher status is more likely to digress than the person with the lower status. Indeed, in some situations we do not quite feel "free" to digress, and this is accompanied by a sense of uncertainty concerning the status relations between our conversational partner and ourselves. The freedom to digress seems to be a prerogative of the higher in status. Why should it be so? Why is it that when we watch an interviewee on TV indulging in one digression after another we get the feeling that he is, or is acting, important, even if we know nothing about him? The reason for this, we suggest, is twofold: it concerns both the cognitive and the interpersonal aspects of communication. The cognitive requirements which digressions make on the listener are greater than those of non-digressional conversations: he is required to hold on to one topic with its full set of relevances in a marginal position, while focusing his attention on another. That this is not an easy cognitive task is evidenced by the fact that digressions do not usually run long, and if they do, the mainstream topic has to be "dug up", having slipped from the mind of one or another of the discourse participants.[9] The additional cognitive load introduced by digressions, we suggest, is experienced as an imposition on the audience (as is the case with TV commercials, to take a familiar analogy).[10] On the interpersonal relationship level, the one-sided, non-consensual shift of topic involved in digressions is clearly a control move, in the sense that, say, putting a question to someone has a control effect, since the interrogator determines, partly, what the respondent will talk about. The

sociolinguistic correlate of this sense of "cognitive imposition" is the one described above: that there is a status differentiation in the frequency and ease that accompany the use of digressions. According to R. Lakoff (1973), the rule of politeness "Don't impose!" is highly operative in natural conversations. It seems to be operative in this case too, where "imposition" has acquired a rather specialized sense.

These observations can be placed in a broader analytic framework as suggested by the work of Brown and Levinson (1978), who treat politeness phenomena in language usage in terms of the face-preserving functions they have in social encounters. Their notion of "face" derives from Goffman's analysis of "face-engagements" as units of "focused interaction":

> Face engagements comprise all those instances of two or more participants in a situation joining each other openly in maintaining a single focus of cognitive and visual attention — what is sensed as a mutual activity, entailing preferential communication rights.

This sense of "mutual activity" can be further described as a state where:

> A shared definition of the situation comes to prevail. This includes agreement concerning perceptual relevancies and irrelevancies, and a 'working consensus' involving a decree of mutual considerateness, sympathy and a muting of opinion differences.

Thus, Brown and Levinson distinguish between "positive" and "negative" face:

(a) negative face: the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, rights to non-distraction — i.e., to freedom of action and freedom from imposition.
(b) positive face: the positive consistent self-image or "personality" (crucially including the desire that this self-image be appreciated and approved of) claimed by interactants (1978: 66).

Social interaction by its very nature involves a lot of what they term "face-threatening acts". These may be a threat to negative face (e.g., requests) or to positive face (e.g., disapproval or even indifference), or to both (e.g., crude command). They may involve the face of the speaker or hearer or both. Brown and Levinson argue (and illustrate with a wealth of examples from a number of unrelated languages) that politeness phenomena in language function as face-preserving devices in conjunction with some face-threatening act.

Our analysis of the politeness values attached to digressions fits in very nicely with this framework, which employs the notion of "imposition" as a central construct. We will briefly illustrate the applicability of their framework, and thereby provide more general grounding to our analysis of the functions and politeness values of digressions, by briefly reviewing and elaborating upon our previous observations, in terms of face threatening events (rather than acts) and face preserving devices.

For interaction-based digressions we could say that the distracting "noise" is interpreted as a potential threat to positive face for both the hearer and the speaker. It is a threat to both their actual and perceived involvement. The current speaker, when he introduces a digression, can therefore be said to be preserving his own face by preventing the hearer from illegitimately slipping out of the interaction; however, he is at the same time preserving the hearer's face by preventing him from breaking a fundamental rule of social interaction (on the assumption that this is something interactants would rather not do). It seems to us that this latter point explains why when the speaker fails to integrate the distraction into the encounter and leaves it up to the hearer to do so, an identically worded digression uttered by the hearer is likely to be heard as a rebuff; the hearer's face has not been preserved, he has been forced to admit the fact that his involvement in the interaction was not as great as the speaker has assumed.

If we compare the politeness or face-preserving factors involved in utterance-based as compared to interaction-based digressions we get an interesting picture: utterance-based digressions, as we have argued, are themselves *face-threatening acts*, since they are one-sided and non-consensual: they are a threat to the hearer's positive face. The further imposition involved in the added cognitive requirement made on the hearer is — if we can consider it in these terms at all — more like a threat to negative face: it is, as it were, a kind of trespassing of the hearer's cognitive domain. That is, utterance-based digressions can be viewed as a combination of a positive and negative face-threatening act, which accounts for the above observations concerning their low politeness value. Interaction-based digressions, on the other hand, are a response to an externally triggered face-threatening event and in themselves are *face preserving acts*. This, in turn, accounts for their high politeness value, as discussed before. In sum, while utterance-based digressions are basically perceived as impolite or face-threatening events, and are therefore, to a considerable degree, the prerogative of the higher in status in a mixed-status

encounter, interaction-based digressions are basically perceived as having a face-preserving function *vis-à-vis* an external, face-threatening event. The cognitive imposition involved in this type of digression is considerably smaller, if it exists at all, since the hearer participates in the rearrangement of the attention field, and hence shares the speaker's motivation for introducing the digressional material.[11]

Note that Brown and Levinson's framework can also readily account for some additional interactional functions of digressions. In certain contexts, digressions may have an evasive character, as when they are introduced at critical points in a generally unpleasant conversation in order to mitigate the unpleasantness by the introduction of topically extraneous relationship supporting material. An example of this would be a conversation between a teacher and a pupil in which the teacher has to inform the student of a failure in an exam. He may find himself digressing in such a way as to express general interest in non-relevant aspects of the student's life, thus signaling overall acceptance of the student as a person and mitigating the threat inherent in his actual message. This "beating around the bush" strategy has a positive-face preserving value. There is also the "stylistically" motivated digression whose main function is to intensify the interest-value of the speaker's contribution. This type of digression, too, is consistent with face-preserving considerations: it is a feature of positive politeness that speakers make their conversational contribution interesting, thus indicating regard for their interlocutors' face by facilitating their involvement in the interaction. By making one's conversation interesting, one engages in far-sighted preventive treatment against conversational misfortunes.

6. Concluding remarks

In this paper we have argued that the study of conversational coherence in terms of sequential relations between the utterances that make up a conversation cannot account for the fact that digressions are usually used in conversational behavior, without causing disruptions in the conversational flow. In examining different types of digressions we have indicated that the sense of coherence that accompanies a conversation that contains digressions varies with the type of digression. In utterance-based digressions, it is due to the fact that, in spite of the digression, the new system of relevances introduced

was at least marginally available at the beginning of the digression. In insertion sequences, relevance to the pre-digression material is meta-linguistically preserved. Finally, in interaction-based digressions, coherence has to do with the interactional function that the digression has in the given encounter. Basically what we hope to have demonstrated is that a proper and broad enough account of our intuitions concerning these discourse phenomena has to take into consideration all this range of factors, particularly purely interactional and implicit factors, rather than relying merely on the sequential relations of utterances and the implications which can be conventionally derived from them.

We do not profess to have exhausted the subject of digression. Beyond a further refinement of the present analysis, and its conceptual machinery, what is certainly required is a great deal of empirical research into the bracketing mechanisms which mark off digressions, additional functions they may have, perhaps additional types. Further validation of the sociolinguistic phenomena described is needed and, perhaps, additional phenomena of this kind can be highlighted.

In particular, we have not discussed the artistic — especially literary — uses of digression. They are well-known devices for heightening suspense, employed even in non-literary oral story telling (cf. Labov 1973). It is interesting to notice that, while in music extensive use is made of the musical analogue of digression, no such an analogue can be apparently found in the visual arts. This would confirm our assumption that one of the main characteristics of digression is its linearity.[12] In general, one of the problems with an account of digression in art is that the "audience" (as opposed to the artist, perhaps) assumes that the *whole work* is imbued with its creator's intentionality. This precludes the occurrence of truly *interactional* digressions, generated as a response to some unexpected distracting factor. It seems that whenever such factors occur in art, the response to them will always be considered as a real *interruption,* rather than as a digression. Thus, in a work of art only the two other types of digression seem to be legitimately present.[13] This observation might perhaps allow us to grasp the double edged irony of T. S. Eliot's verse: the artist pretends that an artistic digression can be a truly interactional one, caused as it were by some external distracting factor; such a pretense is only possible by letting the protagonist be the one who digresses; it has thus the effect of creating the impression of detachment of the poet from his work, and from the creative intentions-underlying it. What is, from the point of view of

Alfred Prufrock, an interaction-based digression, can only be, from the point of T. S. Eliot, an utterance-based one.

Notes

1. Although we should perhaps contest it as well. For "semantic" coherence alone does not ensure conversational coherence. Consider, for example, the sequence: "John went to Chicago last week. Chicago is the second biggest city in the U.S.A. The U.S.A. joined the allied forces in World War II after Pearl Harbor". It is hard to imagine how this sequence, though semantically coherent, could be experienced as a coherent piece of conversation.

2. We are assuming here that speech is a very important phenomenon for man, so that it normally "commands attention". On this assumption, see Chapter 2.

3. Notice that the operator alone cannot do the trick. Its appropriate use is governed by conditions of the type here sketched. If, in the context of the example given, B were to reply (case 3) "By the way, why does this case count as a case of knowledge?", his reply would be felt as "ill-formed"; for it contains a "digression-operator", while no corresponding shift in the set of relevances has occurred.

4. Typical bracketing devices are such expressions as by *the way, it reminds me of* and interjections such as *oh!*, *yeah!*, for introducing digressions, and *to go back*, *so*, or the very common laughter that follows the "point" of a joke, in order to mark the end of a digression. A full characterization of bracketing devices would require detailed empirical research based on observations of natural conversations. Intuitively, it seems to us that one should be able to relate the types of devices used to the types of digressions they introduce.

5. The relationship between implicatures — especially those based on apparent violations of the maxim of relevance — and digressions deserves a much closer study, which we cannot undertake here. For one thing: both digressions and implicatures (of this kind) involve (apparent) failures of relevance. But they seem to exclude each other: if an implicature is conveyed by an apparently disconnected utterance, then it does not count as a digression (or part of it); and vice-versa, if some utterance counts as a digression, then it does not convey an implicature. If this is true, then one further rule should be added to the heuristics proposed in Chapter 2, namely: "(D): Check for digressions".

6. In the case of self-corrections, studied by Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks (1977), we could say that they are the speaker's response to having heard himself talk.

7. In order for this suggestion to be worked out, we would have to be able to assume some kind of hierarchical structure of all the various "meaning" components which contribute to the significance of an utterance. An attempt of this kind was made in Chapter 6.

8. Apparently, clarification and corrective answers are dispensed of this requirement only because their very nature is indicative of their digressive character.

9. Even when a digression is of a clarifying nature, i.e., introduced for the benefit of the audience, it may be felt as a burden on the audience if it is too long, or if such digressions occur too often.

10. The analogy with TV commercials could be taken even further: we could perhaps argue that TV commercials are interruptions which are (rather crudely) robed in the guise of utterance-based digressions; hence, the bracketing devices, usually in the form of music, and the attempt to relate the content, mood or form of TV commercial to those of the material in which they are embedded. This is particularly effective and widely used in children's programs, since children often cannot distinguish between, say, the animated figures in commercials and those belonging to the animation programs they are embedded in, and cannot detect the purposely elusive bracketing devices. Thus, the advertised cereals have the positive values associated with the relevance system of the program's animation story rubbed off on them.

11. Brown and Levinson suggest a formula by which the "weightiness" of a face-threatening act can be "computed":

$$Wx = D(S,H) + P(H,S) + Rx$$

Where Wx stands for the weightiness of face-threatening acts, D(S,H) for the distance between the speaker and the hearer, P(H,S) for the power the hearer has relative to the speaker, and Rx for the absolute ranking of impositions in the particular culture. Without going any further into their analysis we note that, given the Rx is the same for all digressions of the same type (utterance-based) the weightiness of the threat to face they involve is interpreted in terms of the distance and power relationship. This is in line with our intuitive observations concerning the social value of this type of digression.

12. One might, however, think of a very detailed depiction of a vase, within the framework of a traditional portrait of a prince, as a kind of "digression", *unless* the portrait is not really a traditional one, i.e., unless it is assumed that the artist has *other intentions,* besides portraying the prince.

13. In those types of art which require direct interaction with the audience (some forms of modern theater and dance, for example — see Chapter 17), and in improvisations, truly interactional digressions might indeed occur, since the assumption of 'full planning" no longer holds.

Chapter 11

Understanding a metaphor
The beyond enterprise

beyond the stolid iron pond
soldered with complete silence
the huge timorous hills
squat like permanent vegetables

the judging sun pinches smiling
here and there some huddling vastness
claps the fattest finally
and tags it with his supreme blue

whereat the just adjacent valley
rolls proudly his belligerent bosom
deepens his greens inflates his ochres
and in the pool doubles his winnings

e.e. cummings (1991: 938)

We must hold ourselves ... in readiness to abandon the path we have followed for a time, if it should seem to lead to no good result. Only such 'true believers' as expect from science a substitute for the creed they have relinquished will take it amiss if the investigator develops his views further or even transforms them.

Sigmund Freud (1922: 83)

Section 1

When John Stewart invited me to write a paper for *Beyond the Symbol Model*, he believed, in the light of our discussions several years ago, that I would be one of the defenders of the "symbol model" whose limitations the book as a whole purports to transcend. Although, in keeping with the changes in the

intellectual landscape by the end of this century, I have been slowly evolving towards a place somewhere beyond the symbol model, I will — and not only for the sake of playing the devil's advocate or satisfying John's expectations — in a certain sense represent "the symbol model" here. For I will be paying close attention to the meaning of certain expressions, especially to the syncategorematic term 'beyond' — which appears prominently in the title of the book.[1] Since I assume that careful linguistic analysis as a way to gain philosophical insights is a hallmark of "the symbol model", I will be acting — at least in this respect — on behalf of that model.

There is, however, a catch to it. In my present view, 'careful linguistic analysis' goes beyond linguistic analysis as traditionally practiced in analytic philosophy, where the aim is to disclose the 'logic' of the ordinary, literal use of a term or concept. After the work of Mary Hesse, George Lakoff and many others, no appropriate linguistic analysis can overlook the cognitive import of the metaphors we use. In the present case, such an expansion of the notion of 'linguistic analysis' requires close attention to the fact that the theoretical uses of 'beyond' are metaphorical extensions of its primarily spatio-temporal uses. It is the implications of this fact that I purport to bring to the fore here.

Four books bearing the title *Beyond ...* stand out on my shelves: Skinner (1972), Bernstein (1983), Freud (1922), and — perhaps the hidden inspiration for all of them — Nietzche's (1989) *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*. Surely there are more, less perspicuous ones. There are also in my files several articles bearing this title.[2] A bibliographic search in a philosophical index yielded many more *Beyond ...* titles. A sample of the list — which includes, to my surprise, an article by myself (Dascal 1985)[3] — is given in the references. Stewart's project is thus — at least linguistically — in good and productive company. I want to explore the nature of the family resemblance induced among the texts belonging to this company by virtue of the shared metaphor that serves to name and structure them. This exploration, I expect, will shed light on the nature and problems of the Beyond Enterprise in general as well as in its particular instance which is the object of this volume. Although admittedly accidental, I think the sample I have hit upon is representative enough for our purposes.

Section 2

Before we open these books or read these articles, we are confronted with their titles — which should be taken very seriously. For they not only are the 'commercial tags' which will serve to attract the attention of potential customers. They also act as an author's declaration of intentions and as a powerful clue for the 'message' conveyed by their books. Titles deserve, just as any other piece of text, careful syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic analysis.[4]

Two things immediately spring to mind when confronted with the title *Beyond X*. First, that there is something wrong, unsatisfactory, or at least insufficient, with X. Second, that the author proposes a way to overcome the insufficiency of X. Such titles normally apply, thus, to texts that contain both a *critical* and a *hope* component. No wonder that such texts usually comprise two parts: "The first part of the book deals with what we should leave behind, the last part with what lies beyond" (Kaufmann 1975: preface).[5]

This dual nature of these texts is often marked in their headings themselves, through a peculiar 'division of labor' between title and subtitle, one of them indicating that which is to be transcended and the other that which is supposed to transcend it. The subtitle usually refers to that which is supposed to overcome the deficiencies of X, that is, to the hope component. For example:

Beyond Nihilism: Nietzsche's Healing and Edifying Philosophy (Nimrod 1991).
Beyond Matter and Mind: Natural Sciences Synthesized into Philosophy (Albert 1960).
Beyond Dogma and Despair: Toward a Critical Phenomenology of Politics (Dallmayr 1981).
Beyond the Big Bang: Quantum Cosmologies and God (Drees 1990).
Beyond the Secular Mind: A Judaic Response to the Problems of Modernity (Eildelberg 1989).
Beyond the Chains of Illusions: My Encounter with Marx and Freud (Fromm 1962).
Beyond Belief and Unbelief: Creative Nihilism (Leon 1965).
Beyond Realism and Marxism: Critical Theory and International Relations (Linklater 1990).
Beyond Ethnocentrism: A Reconstruction of Marx's Concept of Science (McKelvey 1991).
Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future (Nietzsche 1989).

Beyond Freud: A Study of Modern Psychoanalytic Theorists (Reppen 1985).
Beyond Deficiency: New Views on the Function and Health Effects of Vitamins (Sauberlich and Machlin 1992).
Beyond Deduction: Ampliative Aspects of Philosophical Reflection (Will 1988).

Notice that many of the subtitles attempt to give expression to the sense of *movement* involved in transcending X, by introducing the hope component through such terms as 'toward', 'prelude', 'reconstruction', 'exploration', 'response', 'new', 'synthesis', 'prolegomena' (van Gelder 1994), 'from ... to' (Kaufmann 1975), 'design' (Mitroff et al. 1983), 'confrontation' (Sim 1992), and so on. But these explicit markings are, in a sense, redundant. For subtitles following *Beyond X* are normally taken to indicate at least elements that, in the author's view, contribute to elaborating that which transcends X. This is the case, for example, in Bernstein (1983), Conner (1987), Gunn (1983), Slote (1989). The linguistic order TITLE –> SUBTITLE 'naturally' mirrors the diachronic order OLD THEORY –> NEW THEORY or the logical order CRITIQUE (DESTRUCTION) –> DEVELOPMENT (CONSTRUCTION). As we shall see, this correspondence is anchored in the basic image-schema governing the primary uses of *beyond*.

To be sure, linguistic order can be reversed, as in the following titles:

"Leibniz on the senses and the understanding: Beyond empiricism and rationalism" (Dascal 1985).
Balance and Refinement: Beyond Coherence Methods of Moral Inquiry (De Paul 1993).
Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983).
"Technology and an ethic of limits: Beyond utopia and despair" (Farrel 1983).
Antonio Gramsci: Beyond Marxism and Postmodernism (Holub 1992).

These reversals seem to belong to the set of devices used in order to increase the 'topicality' of an item, as in "That this is a problem many people have acknowledged" or "My dad, all he ever did was farm and ranch" (Givón 1983: 349). Such devices, according to Givón, serve to mark either higher referential accessibility or increased thematic importance (or both) of the item ante-posed. In the case of the titles listed here, although both effects are presumably involved, it seems to me that the pragmatic function of the reversal lies mainly in highlighting the thematic importance of the alternative offered, that is, of the hope component, at the expense of the critical compo-

nent. The mirroring effect of the linguistic order is deliberately sacrificed for this purpose, but the basic diachronic or logical relation induced by the use of *beyond* is preserved, just as in "The lake, it is beyond the mountain" the spatial order OBSERVER–> MOUNTAIN –> LAKE, although not mirrored in the sentence, is preserved.

What is *suggested* by a title is part and parcel of what a *pragmatic* analysis seeks to determine: the *speaker's meaning* of the text, that is, the communicative intention the author seeks to convey through it to an audience. What is characteristic of *suggestions* — or, as pragmaticists call them, *implicatures* — is that, although they are conveyed by a text or utterance, they are not *logically necessary* parts of its meaning. This means that, unlike logical implications, they may be *canceled*. For example, if you ask me whether I am enjoying your party and I reply by saying that the food is excellent, you will normally take me to be expressing less than full enjoyment. I can however (try to) cancel this implicature by adding: "... and the music too, as well as all the rest".[6] An implicature thus functions like a presumption: once detected, it is taken to be present unless some reason is given for suppressing it.

In our case, the *critical* component we have detected has clearly the status of an implicature.[7] This means that one can find *Beyond X* titles where there is no intention of conveying criticism of X, but rather just the intention of developing X, building upon it. Yet, in such a case some effort to cancel the implicature must be made. A case in point is *Beyond Freud* (Reppen 1985), where X (= Freud's theory) is not intended to be criticized. However, the author's awareness of the usual implicature of his title leads him to provide an explicit disclaimer:

> Indeed, the title of this volume, *Beyond Freud*, intends in no way to disparage the originality of psychoanalysis. Instead, it intends to demonstrate how Freud's thinking and how the Freudian texts have been used to expand ideas beyond — Freud (Preface, p. vii).

Another example is Sauerblich and Machlin (1992). This book is described in a pamphlet as a "watershed work on the role of vitamins in human health and nutrition". Its novelty — emphasized in the subtitle — consists however simply in providing scientific evidence for the role of vitamins in preventing a number of diseases. It certainly does not intend to criticize "deficiency". Nor is its purport to criticize popular beliefs on the beneficial effects of vitamins. It lies *beyond* these beliefs only by providing authoritative "scientific" support for them, thereby showing how vitamins can be used to

overcome nutritional deficiencies. This fact is reflected in the choice of title and subtitle. A book with the title *Beyond Vitamins* would suggest a criticism of vitamins. Not so with *Beyond Deficiency*, with *vitamins* judiciously appearing in the subtitle, a place usually reserved for the *hope* component.

The *hope* component seems to belong, generally, to a more deeply entrenched layer of meaning of the expression 'Beyond X' than the critical component.[8] This is revealed by the fact that it is harder to cancel. In fact, I have not found, so far, *Beyond X* texts lacking the hope component. This difference in status between the two components is significant, and may bear on the nature of metaphorical extension in general and on the peculiarities we are here considering. We will return to it later. For the time being it suffices to bear in mind that both are cancelable suggestions — albeit with different degrees of difficulty. Although the hope component is practically always present, it can be construed in quite different ways, ranging from 'extensions' or 'developments' of X, through 'deepenings' or 'radicalizations' of X, up to its 'replacement' by (eventually) 'entirely new alternatives'. Obviously, the particular nature of the hope component is correlated with the nature of the critical component: the more devastating the latter, the more radically new must be the former.

Suggestions and implicatures have to do with the social dimension of meaning, with the interplay between the text and the beliefs, knowledge, and expectations of its intended audience. Every text is designed for some audience (Clark 1992: xviii), and every author takes this fact into account at least to some extent. It stands to reason that *Beyond X* texts are addressed primarily to two kinds of readers/buyers: a) those who are aware of the insufficiency of X, and (having perhaps suffered from it) are looking for alternatives to X or ways of improving X; b) those who naively believe that X is perfectly all right as it stands and are to be awaken from their 'dogmatic sleep' by reading the book: presumably they will be attracted by the surprise that their belief in X is called into question, and their natural curiosity will prompt them to 'call the bluff', and to pay in order to see what the fuss is all about. For the former kind of readers, the *hope*-appeal is dominant; for the latter, the *critical* component. An example of the former customer would be someone who buys, say, *Beyond Conventional Medicine* after years of unsuccessful conventional treatment of his illness. An example of the latter is a Manichean who never doubted the clear-cut and exclusive character of the opposition good/evil, and is struck by the suggestion in Nietzche's title that there may be a third alternative.

The kind of audience primarily envisaged by the author is one of the determinants of the emphasis given to each of the two components and of their particular nature. For example, the intended clients of Dallmayr's (1981) book are political philosophers and scientists who share a "dissatisfaction with the earlier 'behavioral' consensus, which aimed to transform political inquiry into a strictly empirical discipline" (p. vii). For such an audience, there is no need to belabor the critique of the behavioral approach, and the text can be presented as an "outgrowth of the 'post-behavioral' reorientation of the study of politics" (ibid.). Most of the book can be thus devoted to the hope component, that is, to developing an alternative. What it has to overcome is not the behavioral approach (the "dogma" of the title), but the "despair" of theorizing that ensued, leading researchers in the field to turn to "pragmatic problem solving", in the wake of the failure of the "behavioral" attempt to raise their field to the status of a scientific theory.[9] Insofar as it is critical, the book criticizes the narrow view of (scientific) theorizing held by both the defenders of the behavioral approach and by those who despaired from it. Its hope lies in broadening this view by appealing to the philosophical insights of phenomenology (Merleau-Ponty), which, combined with those of critical theory (Habermas), provide the proper way of revitalizing political theory.

Let us now focus on some of the specific characteristics of the critical and hope components of the Beyond Enterprise.

Section 3

The X in *Beyond X* is, first and foremost, a *landmark*, by reference to which something else — that which is supposed to transcend it — is located. This requires the X to be *salient*, not topographically, but culturally, of course. It must possess theoretical significance, historical importance, and widely known status. This is usually taken for granted. Nobody would care to write a book or even an article purporting to go beyond some unknown or unimportant X. No doubt what is important or not is, to some extent, in the eyes of the beholder. But the salience requirement would hardly be satisfied by mere subjective importance. If the salience of X is not a cultural given, part of the author's efforts will have to be diverted to proving it. And if it is not immediately transparent in the term chosen for X (as it surely is in titles parading "Marx", "Freud", "Postmodernism", "Structuralism", "Good and Evil", "Plea-

sure-Principle", "Freedom and Dignity"), the preface will set as its main task to make clear the consensual basis on which the salience of X rests (which is what Dallmayr sets out to do regarding the 'dogma' of his title).

The salience of a landmark is closely related to another requirement it must fulfill: *definiteness*. It makes no sense to locate something as "beyond the house" if there are many houses around or as "beyond the border" if there is no clear borderline around. There is therefore a presumption of uniqueness and definiteness regarding X. Authors are, no doubt, aware of the fact that 'postmodernism', 'Marxism', 'structuralism' and the like are far from satisfying this presumption. And yet they treat these labels as referring to well defined theoretical entities. The use of *the* by John Stewart, in the phrase 'the symbol model', can be seen in this light. Even though he is aware of the fact that there are many varieties of 'symbol models', he treats them as sharing some core properties that provide a definite referent for the phrase. One may question this assumption, but to his credit it must be said that he at least undertakes to substantiate it, rather than merely taking it for granted.

By virtue of its role in the construction 'Beyond X', X acquires a further property, not unrelated to the preceding ones, which is crucial for understanding the critical component. It is located *between* the observer and his or her goal. If the observer/author intended only to *locate* something by reference to X, there would be no need to criticize or overcome X. But it is a typical characteristic of the texts in question that they purport to *move past* X towards that other thing. X is therefore, broadly speaking, an *obstacle* in the way towards the goal. This is enhanced by the very salience and definiteness of X, which make it difficult to simply ignore or bypass it. The task of the critical component is to handle this 'obstacle'. Its extent, depth, or strength will depend on how much the obstacle is perceived to hinder the author's attempts to reach the goal. Accordingly, it may range from very mild criticism (sometimes disguised as praise) to all-embracing 'deconstruction'. Let us consider these in turn.

1. **Building upon**. I have hedged "obstacle" with the modifier "broadly speaking" precisely in order to account for the cases where criticism seems to be practically absent. As we have seen, sometimes the X is perceived favorably, as something that does not necessarily hinder the attempt to reach the goal, but rather helps. Even in these cases, however, if you have to "climb the giant's shoulders" on your way to the goal, you need to spend some effort to do so. If you want to go "beyond Freud" by relying upon his achievements, you have to

learn these achievements in order to become acquainted with that which can be further developed in them. Indirectly, this is a critique, albeit very mild. For it amounts to showing that Freud's theory is not complete or fully developed.

It may be argued — correctly — that the proper place for this "building upon" theme is the hope component, rather than the critical component. And indeed, in many cases, that which is to be built upon is mentioned in the hope-subtitle. What is interesting, however, is that even in its 'proper' hope position, that which is built upon is subject to criticism. A case in point is Fromm (1962), where Marx and Freud are the giants who began to break the "chains of illusion", but did not go far enough, leaving room for the completion of their work by the author. Such a completion requires a critical attitude toward the assumptions and achievements of the giants. Thus,

> Freud's vision was narrowed down by his mechanistic, materialistic philosophy which interpreted the needs of human nature as being essentially sexual ones (Fromm 1962: 26).

and

> Marx was opposed to two positions: the unhistorical one that the nature of man is a substance present from the very beginning of history, and the relativistic position that man's nature has no inherent quality whatsoever and is nothing but the reflex of social conditions. But he never arrived at the full development of his own theory concerning the nature of man, transcending both the unhistorical and the relativistic positions; hence he left himself open to various and contradictory interpretations (Fromm 1962: 31).

2. **Inner critique**. A slightly stronger form of criticism consists in disclosing in X contradictions, gaps, insufficient development, apparent counter-examples, insufficient grounding, and other forms of intrinsic problems. To be sure, these may add up to building a case for abandoning X altogether. But, if one places oneself within the 'research program' (in Lakatos' sense) represented by X, they may as well function as motivations to correct or improve X rather than for abandoning it.

Thus, the "contradictory interpretations" of Marx's theory are, according to Fromm, partially the fault of Marx himself, but they can be overcome, and once this is done the program can be pursued and brought to fruition. Hope is not to be sought outside the program, in a completely new framework, but rather inside it. This often requires a re-conceptualization of the program in somewhat broader terms. Unlike Nietzche, who is critical of "the search for

truth" and of the Enlightenment's belief in it, Fromm — along with Marx and Freud — depicts himself as a true heir to the Enlightenment, who believes in science, observation, objectivity, and so on, as the way to freedom. He re-conceptualizes this shared program in terms of the notion of 'humanism':

> The common soil from which both Marx's and Freud's thought grew is, in the last analysis, the concept of humanism. Freud's defense of the rights of man's natural drives against the forces of social convention, as well as his ideal that reason controls and ennobles these drives, is part of the tradition of humanism. Marx's protest against a social order in which man is crippled by his subservience to the economy, and his ideal of the full unfolding of the total, unalienated man, is part of the same humanistic tradition.
>
> Different as they were, they have in common an uncompromising will to liberate man, an equally uncompromising faith in truth as the instrument of liberation and the belief that the condition for this liberation lies in man's capacity to break the chain of illusion (Fromm 1962: 25-26).

An interesting example of inner critique occurs when the author himself is the originator of the X. This is the case in Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, where he sets out to examine his own earlier assumption of the primacy of the pleasure principle in psychic life. As usual, Freud is very careful in defining what would count as evidence against that assumption:

> ... even under the domination of the pleasure-principle there are ways and means enough of making what is in itself disagreeable/agreeable...; these cases and situations ending in final pleasure gain ... are of no help, since they presuppose the existence and supremacy of the pleasure-principle and bear no witness to the operation of tendencies beyond the pleasure-principle, that is to say, tendencies which might be of earlier origin and independent of this (Freud 1922: 16).

The book is a search for such earlier and independent tendencies, whose result is positive. Hence, the basic answer to the question "Is there something *beyond* the pleasure-principle?" is positive too. However, the actual answer is, according to Freud himself, "circuitous".[10] It is not an unqualified "Yes", but rather a "Yes, but" which, according to the logic of *but* (cf. Chapter 6) amounts in fact to a "No". The overall result, thus, is not the unqualified overthrow of the pleasure-principle (a possibility Freud himself does not exclude, as made plain in the quotation used as motto for this paper), but rather its positioning within a more complex stage of the theory, motivated by questions raised within the theory itself.

In general, the upshot of inner critique is to make plain that the criticized views are liable of *reform*. It is 'constructive critique' insofar as it paves the way for further development of a program or theory, once the detected difficulties are overcome. No wonder that it is directly correlated, thus, with the reform theme in the hope component.

3. **Confinement**. In most cases, the critical effort is, first and foremost, concerned with showing the limitations of X. This comprises several correlated aspects: first, X is unable to cope with the range of phenomena it is supposed to handle (it does not cure what it is supposed to cure; it does not explain what it is supposed to explain; etc.); second, X artificially restricts the domain of phenomena or of explanatory tools, thereby *excluding* what should be taken into account; third, reliance on the inefficient X as *the* proper way to handle something imposes on *us* unwarranted limitations, *confines* us to certain courses of action or modes of understanding, creates in us what psychologists call a 'mental set'.[11] A good portion of the critical part of the texts in my sample is devoted to these (and perhaps other) aspects of the limitations of X.

For example, John Stewart (1995, 1996) argues that 'the symbol model' (a) is unable to account for the most basic fact of language use, namely the interactional contact characteristic of natural communicative praxis; (b) arbitrarily excludes from its explanatory arsenal the insights of dialogue-oriented thinkers (Bakhtin, Buber), of ontologically-oriented accounts of language (Heidegger), of hermeneutics (Gadamer) and so on; (c) induces us to think of language in terms of the representational relation, which in turn forces us into a mental set that takes for granted — rather than questioning — problematic assumptions such as the "two-world" assumption (language on the one side and the represented world on the other), the compositionality of language (which he labels "atomism"), the dichotomy subject-object, etc.

Another example is Dallmayr's (1981), who criticizes current political science for its exclusion of relevant philosophical insights, such as those that can be derived from phenomenology. Still another is Bernstein (1983), who contends that the traditional dichotomy objectivism-relativism (and its cognates, rationality vs. irrationality, objectivity vs. subjectivity, realism vs. anti-realism) drastically restricts our options. Thereby, it forces those of us who do not want to espouse relativism to accept an uncritical view of the objectivity of science, which does not do justice to the complex nature of scientific practice.

Notice that (1) the present kind of critique is itself a matter of degree: there are stronger and milder forms of limitation and confinement; and (2) at this stage the conclusion might be that, even though X has such drawbacks, it is "the only game in town" (to use a phrase dear to Jerry Fodor; see Dascal 1997c). The critic need not provide, at this stage, alternatives that would free us from the limitations of X. From a critical point of view, it is sufficient to show these limitations in order to remove the *blocking* effect they have on further progress.

4. **Desacralization**. Another, stronger form of critique consists in showing that, in spite of its widespread acceptance, X's aura of necessity, indispensability, or 'sacredness' is spurious. A variety of arguments can be used to support this claim. One may resort to history: X came into being in the course of history, at some more or less specific moment; just as it was not there all the time, it is likely to disappear now or in the future. Or to ontogenesis: X is not innate but acquired; hence, under different contingencies, it is likely not to develop at all. Socio-cultural variability may add further support to the ontogenetic and historical arguments: societies other than ours (which are not inferior to ours) do not accept X as a matter of course. By desacralizing X through its historical or socio-cultural relativization, one also reduces the weight of X's *authority*. In so doing, one is of course paving the way for the *hope* component: X is *not* necessary, *not* ultimately authoritative, and — as other historical periods and cultures show — there are alternatives to X. Rarely, however, the "Beyond..." texts rest content with pointing out *merely existent* alternatives, for they seek to propose a new, original alternative, even when they make use of existent elements.

Skinner (1972) offers perhaps the best example of the desacralization move, even though he does not resort to the kinds of argument just mentioned. Unlike Freud, Skinner does not proceed in a circuitous way. From the outset it is clear to him that the sacred notions of freedom and dignity, as well as all their mentally infected cognates, are unnecessary theoretical constructs, which a proper science of mind and society can and should do without. The first task is then to desacralize this entrenched web of interrelated concepts that prevents our progress towards better understanding and action. Like Descartes, Skinner is confident that the way to progress passes through the complete overthrow of all the prejudices sanctified by tradition. The obstacle is construed as immense. The imaginary line linking freedom and dignity is just a minor indication of its extension. All sorts of usual and apparently

harmless concepts belong to it — intention, purpose, feeling, will, autonomy, value — what not! All of them are interconnected, however, by a single thread: mentalism. Chapter after chapter Skinner demolishes this huge wall, thereby desacralizing not only freedom and dignity but also "the mind" itself. Once this is done, what lies ahead is a crystal-clear single construct: schedule of reinforcement, which explains everything that the components of the demolished wall were supposed to explain, the latter's entrenchment being finally seen for what it is — the result of mistaking mere by-products for real causes. Were it not for the fact that hope too is a concept belonging to the wall, we might say that this vision would flood us in a blissful bath of hope.

Let us pause to reflect on the difference between Skinner's and Freud's choices of critical strategies. It stems perhaps from the fact that, while the pleasure-principle is Freud's own creation, freedom, dignity, and cognates are *not* Skinner's creation, but rather the creation of those who stand in the way of the development of a scientific psychology and of a scientific approach to society and politics. Even if critical of his own construct, and even if willing to abandon his earlier path, Freud must do so in a careful way, so as not to look entirely foolish or unreliable for having taken that path in the first place. Skinner need not have such qualms, and can therefore be much more direct and radical in his critique. Consequently, his trajectory can be much more straightforward. He knows what is wrong, how to transcend it, and also what lies ahead. Freud is much more exploratory in his text. Not only is it not clear to him that the supremacy of the pleasure-principle is absolutely wrong, but it is also not clear how to prove it is, and particularly what lies ahead, for the region "beyond" is still shrouded in "obscurity" (Freud 1922: 68). Hence his candid words of caution concerning the status of his conclusions, of which he says: "I do not know how far I believe in them" (76). This is a caution, however, which should not prevent him from exploring that region, "by combining facts with imagination", albeit it leads to proposals that "have only a tentative validity" (77).

While Freud's critical stance seems appropriate to a theory in the making, which questions itself, and builds upon its self-criticism, Skinner's stance seems more appropriate to pave the way to a radically new theory, which does not want to owe anything to its predecessor. Vis-à-vis X, the former is 'constructive' because it preserves at least part of its validity, while the latter can afford to be 'destructive', because it sees itself as entirely independent of X. This observation could be generalized: the two first types of criticism here

discussed belong to the constructive family, the three last ones to the destructive, and the third shares elements of both.

5. **Deconstruction**. This is the deepest or strongest form of critique. It does not seek only to demolish a theory, a program, or a paradigm. It goes deeper than that — 'archeological' (Foucault's term) — for it undertakes to suppress the very terrain or need for replacing the demolished building by another.[12] Deconstruction is so radical a critique that it leaves no room for hope. If it succeeds, the absolutely flat landscape it leaves behind has no landmarks left, nothing to go beyond. In its radical form, deconstruction cannot, strictly speaking, be a moment in the Beyond Enterprise. It lacks entirely and deliberately the transcendence motive. It denies the very possibility of a "grand narrative" of progress. Deconstructionists proper do not write *Beyond...* texts.

Yet, paradoxically — that is, by deliberately resorting to paradox — they manage to fit the enterprise. For one thing: their devastating critique of all constructions holds the promise of a construction-free world, a world where subservience to any system, theory, or narrative is perceived as contingent, and therefore as not binding — a world where, potentially at least, we can free ourselves of all bonds. Insofar as liberation is one of the key motives in the hope component of the Beyond Enterprise, deconstruction may in principle play the role of its critical counterpart.

If we consider — anachronistically perhaps — Nietzsche to be a practitioner (perhaps the best ever) of deconstruction, we have an example of a *Beyond ...* text written within this tradition. In his book, Nietzsche indeed seeks to demolish not this or that version of morality in order to replace it by another, but rather to suppress the very need for any morality — leading to a new phase in the 'natural history of morality' which he calls 'extra-moral' (Nietzsche 1966: 44). In order to reach this phase, each moral concept is to be abandoned *along with* its opposite:

> Suppose someone were thus to see through the boorish simplicity of this celebrated concept of "free will" and put it out of his head altogether; I beg of him to carry his "enlightenment" a step further, and also put out of his head the contrary of this monstrous conception of "free will": I mean "unfree will"... (Nietzsche 1966: 28-29).

Otherwise, we will remain forever prisoners of the conceptual scheme that binds together all such (and other philosophical) concepts, determining the entire field of possible philosophies:

> That individual philosophical concepts are not anything capricious or autonomously evolving, but grow up in connection and relationship with each other; that, however suddenly and arbitrarily they seem to appear in the history of thought, they nevertheless belong just as much to a system as all the members of the fauna of a continent — is betrayed in the end also by the fact that the most diverse philosophers keep filling in a definite fundamental scheme of possible philosophies. Under an invisible spell, they always revolve once more in the same orbit... (Nietzsche 1966: 27).

Freeing ourselves from this and other bonds requires accepting 'superficiality' ("Anyone who has looked deeply into the world may guess how much wisdom lies in the superficiality of men" (71)), ceasing to over-value truth ("To recognize untruth as the condition of life" (12)), becoming able to laugh at those philosophies that take themselves seriously ("as soon as any philosophy begins to believe in itself, it always creates the world in its own image" (16)), and so on.

All these attitudes, along with many other devices used in the text (arguing for opposite theses, multiplying distinctions, resorting to paradox, etc.), are employed to undermine all forms of dogmatism. And this very uncompromising and deconstructive fight against dogmatism is what produces hope. For it engenders a "spiritual tension" that yields "energies" and freedom that can be put to use to go beyond ("with so tense a bow we can now shoot for the most distant goals" (2)), even though we may not have a clear idea of these distant goals.[13] Such 'constructive developments' of Nietzche's thought as those of Aloni (1991), Kaufmann (1975), or Leon (1965), however faithful to the source, at least testify to the presence in it of a stimulating hope component.

Section 4

In contrast to the three key properties of the X (cultural salience, definiteness, being an obstacle) that are the target of the critical component, that which lies beyond X, the goal that the hope component has for its main task to further, displays corresponding opposite properties. First, it is *new* and, as such, cannot be well-known, established, that is, culturally salient. Second, it is *open-ended*: being a new theory, in its first stage of elaboration, it lacks definiteness and counts as one of its virtues its vagueness and programmatic character. Third, rather than being an obstacle that blocks the development of the field, it *frees* it from such obstacles and *dynamicizes* the field by creating

new alternatives. The hope component highlights these properties. Alas, as we all know too well, the new becomes old and the open-ended is not immune to sclerosis; hence what once furthered dynamism may become a threat to it. Consequently, the hope component has also as a task to thwart these fears, by at least indicating that the new alternative will not fall prey to the same criticisms that led to the fall of its predecessor.

1. **Liberation**. This is a dominant theme in *Beyond ...* texts. The critical groundwork, if successful, is supposed to provide the decisive step in freeing the reader from the hold of the limiting conceptual framework. The author, who has been able to detect the limitations of a dominant conceptual framework or practice and free herself from them, not only communicates her findings to the reader; she also presents her achievement as a paradigmatic example. The stronger the bonds, the more valuable is liberation *per se*. Its sheer possibility generates hope. Hence, the stronger versions of the critical component, which emphasize the stronghold of the chains that bind us, tend to rest content with liberating us from them (through critique), without bothering or perhaps even by deliberately avoiding to tell us what to do with our newly acquired freedom.

2. **Developing an alternative**. The euphoria of liberation being ephemeral, hope must be sustained through more substantial means. If not a fully worked out new theory, at least a sketch of what lies ahead, along with a path to reach it, is usually provided. This is itself a display of hope, for it shows that one does not believe that skepticism is the last word. Sketching an alternative amounts to interpreting criticism not as an aim in itself, but as a step towards something better.

Depending on the kind of critique leveled against X, the development of the alternative can be presented as *improvement*, *reform*, or *revolution*. Freud's tentative addition of basic tendencies other than the pleasure-principle to his theory illustrates the first kind. Fromm's *synthesis* between Marx and Freud, which is supposed to overcome the limitations of both, may be an illustration of the second.[14] Skinner's replacement of mental explanations by behavioral ones is certainly an example of the third.

Sometimes the development of the alternative is minimal and consists merely in showing that life is possible without the criticized X (Nietzsche is a case in point). But sometimes, in order to escape charges of vagueness, lack of seriousness, and so on, an effort is made to provide a well-articulated alternative, where the differences with X are made apparent (Kaufmann, Stewart).

The danger, of course, is to make it so well articulated as to become itself an easy target for the Beyond Enterprise (Skinner's theory is a case in point).

3. **Transcendence**. The hope conveyed by *Beyond ...* texts is in some cases explicitly (e.g., Cattell 1987; Eildelberg 1989; Aloni 1991; Ferrell 1983; Frankl 1960) and in others implicitly (e.g., Fromm 1962; Kaufmann 1975) related to the hope inherent in transcendentalism, be it religious or secular. I mean by this more than just pointing out the fact that going beyond something is somehow transcending (it). Even though many *Beyond ...* texts purport to reject abstract, idealized, or otherwise 'unrealistic' conceptual frameworks, and to bring us 'down to earth', they aspire nevertheless to offer a sense of what is *really real* or important. The more radical this departure of earlier conceptions of 'reality' is, the more it brings us to 'another world', where truth and real hope are to be found. Breaking away from old conceptual tools, old forms of language, old prejudices, are means to enter this other world, where everything has to be reinvented. Even if all this is done in the name of 'science' or 'reason', it easily leads to utopia (e.g., Skinner's *Walden Two*).

Cattell's *Beyondism* epitomizes this transcendentalist motive. 'Beyondism' is based on science, more specifically, on sociobiology. It is defined as

> a system for discovering and clarifying ethical goals from a basis of scientific knowledge and investigation, by the objective research procedures of scientific method (Cattell 1987: 1).

Cattell is aware of the fact that the term 'Beyondism' may suggest an afterlife, a suggestion he rejects. And yet, he does not reject the idea of a *future life*, which, though radically different from that portrayed by the revealed religions, is such that "much of [its] emotional meaning for the individual is the same" (p. vii). Cattell's choice of emphasizing the *religious* aspect of his system, its ability to sustain "the emotional restraints and expectations" built up by Christianity (p. vii), while at the same time claiming that it is derived *from* science and created by "rationalists, thinking liberals, sociobiologists, and scientifically progressive, educated persons of all origins" (p. viii) is certainly puzzling. And yet, I surmise, it is not contradictory precisely because it caters to the transcendental motive latent in all versions — scientific, philosophical, or religious—of the Beyond Enterprise.

4. **Reinventing language**. A particularly difficult kind of confinement or limitation the development of an alternative to X has to face is the inadequacy of the extant vocabulary (which in fact reflects the conceptual frame-

work one wants to get rid of) for its purposes. One must get beyond the current vocabulary if one wants to transcend the limitations of the conceptual framework it reflects. But in order to introduce a new vocabulary one cannot but use the existing one, thereby risking one's ability to really transcend X. A widespread solution to this problem is to neologize, either by creating entirely new terms or by hyphenating old ones or else by endowing old terms with new meanings. Heidegger — who is one of the sources Stewart appeals to — was a master neologist, in all its three varieties. Although I have not been able to check this matter systematically, I believe this technique is widespread in *Beyond ...* texts.[15]

A more subtle way in which 'old' language may undermine the success of the Beyond Enterprise is through the persistence of old root metaphors. Since these metaphors are pervasive and hardly noticed, an effort must be made to become aware of them, to be followed by an attempt to eradicate them, and finally to replace them by new metaphors. As far as I have been able to verify, very little explicit attention has been given in *Beyond ...* texts to this problem, although some of them no doubt struggle to free themselves from old metaphors and to create new ones. The appeal they make to the old metaphor induced by the term 'beyond' reveals both their lack of awareness of the problem at hand and the impossibility of getting rid of metaphor. It is worth noticing, however, that in both respects Freud anticipated much of the current vindication of metaphor's cognitive importance:

> [We are] obliged to operate with scientific terms, i.e., with the metaphorical expressions peculiar to psychology (or more correctly: psychology of the deeper layers). Otherwise we should not be able to describe the corresponding processes at all, nor in fact even to have remarked them. The shortcomings of our description would probably disappear if for the psychological terms we could substitute physiological or chemical ones. These too only constitute a metaphorical language, but one familiar to us for a much longer time and perhaps also simpler (Freud 1922:78).

5. **Tu quoque**. It is not easy to immunize the proposed alternative from the very same kind of criticism addressed against X. Especially if that criticism has been sweeping and 'profound' — as it is supposed to be. For example, if one has rejected the traditional notions of 'representation', 'sign', 'interpretation' and 'justification' as components of the undesirable 'symbol model', it is not easy to prove that one's alternative conception does not surreptitiously include remnants of these notions. If, in a post-modern vein, one further

rejects the traditional notions of truth, rationality, argumentation, validity, objectivity, etc., what kind of support can one claim one's alternative to have? Two possibilities are open in such a case: either not to propose an alternative or else to express total indifference regarding the status of the alternative or account one proposes. Both strategies are used by deconstructionists: rejecting the idea that criticism must be 'constructive', i.e., that it must provide alternatives, and ignoring (or even welcoming) *tu quoque* arguments against their accounts.[16]

Usually, however, *Beyond ...* texts reveal a surprising naïveté concerning the dangers attending the alternatives they propose, which makes them easy prey for *tu quoque* arguments. A case in point is Fromm (1962). There is a kind of paradox in Fromm's attitude, which — perhaps unintentionally — reveals an unexpected meaning in the title of his book, *Beyond the Chains of Illusions*. In what is perhaps the best chapter of the book, Fromm analyzes the fate of Marx's and Freud's doctrines. Both began as *radical* innovations, stemming from *radical criticism* of prevailing ideas and practices, a criticism that showed such ideas and practices to be *illusions*. Freud's concept of rationalization and Marx's concept of ideology both described the nature of these compelling illusions and provided the tools for getting rid of them. The fate of their doctrines, however, was to become themselves ideologies. In the hands of organizations (the psychoanalytic establishment, the communist parties) they became bureaucratized, thereby losing their vital critical ethos. They became instrumental in leading men astray from the very same liberating ideas and ideals that had animated them. In this ideological guise, they became themselves illusions, additional chains to be broken in our path towards liberation. The way Fromm proposes for breaking these new chains is the return to the vitality of the original critical power of the very same doctrines that ultimately produced such chains. Fromm's *beyond*, thus, consists in going back — with the aim, of course, of leaping ahead. But — one might ask — what will prevent history from repeating itself? Why should we assume that the illusion-engendering mechanism will not, once more, follow the same track? Why should we presume that the process that led to the ideologization of Freud's and Marx's doctrines is entirely due to causes extraneous to the nature of these doctrines, causes that, if removed, will preserve their liberating power? Couldn't the reason for their petrifaction lie precisely in the fact that they attempted to transcend their critical/skeptical component, viewing it only as a step towards reaching the truth? Isn't Fromm himself victim of

another, deeper illusion — the belief in the possibility of remaining faithful to the ethos both of the liberating power of radical criticism and of the existence and accessibility of truth?

It is possible that Fromm's heroic attempt to criticize the ideologized versions of Marx's and Freud's views, while at the same time remaining faithful to their 'core' of truth, illustrates an aspect of the logic of the beyond enterprise: in order to *really* go beyond, moderate criticism coupled with improvement and/or reform is not enough; once you undertake the beyond move, nothing short of full and radical criticism coupled with all-out conceptual revolution will do; for, if you fall short of that, your move will fall prey to a (justifiable) *tu quoque* argument.

Section 5

The cognitive and linguistic aspects of our handling of spatial relations and motion have been intensively studied by psychologists and linguists, often within a cross-cultural perspective, in the last two decades.[17] The significance of such studies has been broadened by the development of a theory, largely due to George Lakoff, which highlights the fact that both our language and conceptualizations are, for the most part, metaphorically structured.[18] According to this theory, these structuring metaphors are grounded on an 'experiential basis', where spatial relations occupy a privileged position. It is, therefore, of primary importance to start from an up-to-date account of the linguistic-cognitive treatment of spatial relations in order to be able to explore their contribution to the metaphorical structuration of other domains. For this purpose, I will rely upon the cross-linguistic study of Svorou (1993), which makes use of much of the preceding literature on the subject and focuses on the front-back axis — which is the one relevant for our purposes.

If one assumes that one of the basic communicative uses of spatial terms is to convey the location of entities, and that this is usually done by way of specifying some sort of relation they bear to other entities, a first distinction to be made is that between the entity to be located — the *Trajector* (TR) in Svorou's terminology — and the entity with respect to which the TR is located — the *Landmark* (LM).[19] Typically, the relation between these two entities is perceived and linguistically treated as asymmetrical. Such an asymmetry may be construed in different ways. The two entities may be 'objectively' asym-

metrical vis-à-vis their size, orientation, direction of actual or possible motion, and so on. The asymmetry may be induced or projected by a tacit or explicit appeal to an *observer* who may be the speaker, the addressee, or someone else (Svorou 1993: 9). The asymmetry may also be social or cultural: culturally important, frequently encountered, things stand in asymmetrical relation to less important or less frequent ones. Talmy (1983) has observed that in such asymmetrical pairs, the entity usually more likely to be selected as an LM tends to be on the upper end of the scales mentioned above: larger, more frequently encountered, more culturally significant, and so on. The actual construal of the asymmetry will depend upon the *reference frame* employed by the speaker, and the choice of a particular way of describing a spatial arrangement will depend on several contextual factors.

The term 'beyond' characteristically serves to express an ULTERIOR relation, characterized by the following assumptions: 1. The LM is treated as a one-dimensional entity; 2. The TR is located at the region that extends away from the LM and away from an observer (Svorou 1993: 133). The first assumption implies that the LM is normally treated as devoid of intrinsic orientation. The second assumption implies that the region where the TR is located is 'projected' through an imaginary movement leading from the observer to the LM (this may be the 'movement' of sight). It also implies that that region is 'open' to eventual further specification through the context. The ULTERIOR relation belongs, according to Svorou (1993: 170), to the semantic field of the FRONT-REGION, which includes also, among other things, such relations as OPPOSITE and OBSTRUCTION.

Most of the observations and definitions regarding the spatial use of 'beyond' correspond quite straightforwardly to the observations we made regarding its metaphorical use. The correspondence covers the properties of the "X" (i.e., the LM), of the "goal" (the TR), as well as facts such as the intermediary (and hence potentially obstructive) position of the LM in the path leading from the author/observer to the TR, and many others.[20] But it is certainly the *movement* element inherent in the very image-schema that defines ULTERIOR that is picked up as the most significant aspect that informs the metaphorical extension(s) we have been considering, an aspect which is highlighted by the reinforcement of 'beyond' through a 'toward'. This accounts for most of the details of our observations:

1) The field of research is presented by this construction as *dynamic*, as a *process* whose dynamism has been temporarily blocked, but will now be resumed.

2) The LM is responsible for such a blocking. Consequently, it is described as a well-defined position that constitutes a sort of *static* point of equilibrium, as a *consensual* or at least as a *dominant* position, which *blocks* further evolution, because it has led the field to a *dead end*.

3) While the LM *closes* the field of research, the TR is supposed to *reopen* it. Such a feat can be achieved only by a *non-consensual* proposal, which introduces the necessary *dynamic* imbalance for getting the field *in the move* again.

4) The critique of the LM must demonstrate its consensual (or dominant), static, and blocking character. The first requirement explains the tendency to reduce differences between alleged holders of the LM to a common denominator. Such a presentation of the LM is of necessity simplified, and prompts claims by its defenders to the effect that the critic is misrepresenting their positions and attacking a straw man. The second requirement explains the suppression of dynamic or progressive components in the presentation of LM: it is a 'mature', 'fully developed', 'spelled-out' position; as a 'research program', it is kept 'alive' only through minor, ad-hoc, 'degenerative' changes, rather than through 'progressive' innovations or reorganizations. The third requirement explains the emphasis on the stifling effect of LM upon the whole field.

5) By contrast, TR must be presented as held by the underdogs of the field, those whose opinions have not been paid attention to because the consensus considered them 'bizarre', 'imprecise', 'unscientific', 'not well argued for', and so on. Furthermore, in order to produce the desired dynamization of the field, TR *must* be itself presented as 'open-ended', as a 'direction' of research, a 'program' worth pursuing further, rather than as a completely elaborated theory. This explains its *programmatic* character.

6) The overall result of the dynamization due to the use of the *beyond* frame is an emphasis on the *historicity* of theory formation and evolution. The criticized consensual position itself is now viewed as a moment in the historical evolution of the field, rather than as an end point. This explains why even the latest fashionable theories may be challenged by the use of the 'beyond X' frame (Beyond Deconstruction, Beyond Structuralism, Beyond Post-Moder-

nity, etc.), suggesting an even stronger "in the move" effect. At the same time, it explains the ever present possibility of *tu quoque*.

7) Just as the critical component which sees in the LM an obstacle is motivated by emphasizing the spatial properties of the movement implicit in the 'beyond' construction, the hope component is motivated by stressing the temporal aspect of such a movement. Hope is indeed a propositional attitude or emotional stance that necessarily refers to the future. It also implies that the future is somehow better than the present and past. In other words, the movement from the observer past the LM to the TR is interpreted as having a clear orientation: *progress*. In this light, the nature of the LM as an obstacle acquires also a temporal dimension: it is perceived as blocking the 'course of history' towards upcoming better stages, and portrayed as a 'traditional' and 'old' position. The TR, by contrast, should be depicted as 'non-traditional' and 'new'. Its novelty vis-à-vis the LM is a matter of degree, from minor modifications to major innovations — from small steps to large steps in the path of progress. So too is the kind and amount of improvement it contains, from small corrections of mistakes to full-fledged conceptual revolutions conceived as giant leaps ahead.

8) While progress can in principle be achieved without the need to overcome obstacles, it seems to be hard to separate it from the notion of hope. Hence the deeper entrenchment of the hope component in the Beyond Enterprise that was observed in section 2.

Section 6

Why is this metaphor a 'natural' — indeed, a conventional — way of conceptualizing the abstract domain(s) represented in *Beyond ...* texts? One possible way to answer this question is to treat the naturalness of the metaphor as grounded in 'the structure of our experience'.[21] This would require us to answer the following questions:

1. What determines the choice of a possible well structured source domain?
2. What determines the pairing of the source domain with the target domain?
3. What determines the details of the source-to-target mapping? (Lakoff 1987: 276),

by searching our experience for the appropriate 'structural correlations' between source and target. For,

> there are many structural correlations in our experience. Not all of them motivate metaphors, but many do. When there is such a motivation, the metaphor seems *natural*. The reason it seems natural is that the pairing of the source and target domains is motivated by experience, as are the details of the mapping (Lakoff 1987: 278).

The first question is relatively easy to answer. The ULTERIOR image-schema is pervasive in experience, well-understood, well-structured, and correlated with other basic schemas such as the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema.

A possible reply to the second question is that there is a correlation between ULTERIOR experiences (the source) and our personal experiences of intellectual progress (the target). We experience the latter as an oriented process, whereby we pass through a set of stages, in an open-ended series. The essence of this process is the process itself, not any of its particular stages, just as the essence of the ULTERIOR experience is its relational character, which can be reiterated *ad libidum*.[22] Insofar as our personal intellectual progress involves not only learning ready-made concepts or theories, but also creating them, thereby contributing to the progress or motion of a field of research, it is relatively unproblematic to extend the correlation, beyond personal progress, to a field's progress.[23]

It is in the third question that we are in for an interesting surprise. It would seem that the kind of progress that most naturally matches the ULTERIOR schema is linear, cumulative progress. And yet, as we have seen, *Beyond ...* texts more often than not present a different picture of progress: a process of overcoming obstacles, of being forced to abandon earlier achievements which now block our way and beginning anew. This suggests that the significant details of our ULTERIOR and PROGRESS experiences correlated through the metaphorical link are rather those that involve non-linear paths: detours, zigzags, stepping back to leap ahead, trial and error, etc. There is no doubt that we have such experiences in our intellectual development, just as we have experiences of straight paths and cumulative progress. As we have seen, the Beyond Enterprise allows for both interpretations. But in the majority of cases, it selects the former rather than the latter as its dominant structuring principle.

Section 7

We could no doubt go beyond this initial exploration of the Beyond Enterprise. For reasons that are beyond my control, it had to be interrupted here. Let me outline a few preliminary conclusions that can be drawn so far from this study. This will help to indicate the larger framework within which I locate studies of this kind.

First we are hardly aware of the fact that the little word 'beyond', as used in the kinds of texts here examined and in hundreds of similar ones — where it often appears as the first title word — is a powerful metaphor. The reason for this lack of awareness is simply that such a use has become conventionalized in our culture. As a result, it has become remarkably field-independent (as shown by the wide variety of fields covered by our sample). It is, so to speak, a ready-made tool that can be picked up from our conceptual toolbox in order to be easily applied to practically any kind of inquiry.

Second, this tool is not 'neutral'. For it imposes a certain structuration of the field of inquiry. Its choice carries with it a 'hidden agenda', not devoid of epistemological and ontological implications. One is that the choice of a 'beyond' framework favors a view of inquiry as dynamic rather static, as diachronic rather than synchronic, as concerned with both the past and the future. Another is that this dynamic perspective is intrinsically associated with the theme of progress, a fact that endows the Beyond Enterprise with a sort of deep optimism. It conveys the belief that there is always a way — a *tao* — to overcome even the most formidable obstacles to intellectual progress. An additional implication is that the selection of the non-linear path of progress, implicit in most of the uses of this metaphor we have examined, indicates its 'natural' affinity — albeit unawares — with those epistemologies that emphasize criticism, controversy, crisis, scientific revolution, and other forms of intellectual conflict as the true engines of cognitive evolution.

Third, products are not independent of the tools employed in making them. It is only to be expected that the earlier mentioned properties of the 'beyond tool' be mirrored in the kinds of theories proposed by those who engage in the Beyond Enterprise, as well as in their practices. Thus the models or theories they will tend to reject are those perceived primarily as static. For example, 'the symbol model' is rejected mainly on the grounds that it views language as a system of synchronically fixed signs, each of which functions as a surrogate for that which it represents or stands for. Those that seek to go

beyond it propose, instead, a dynamic view of language, based on interaction, dialogue, the fluidity of meaning and interpretation, and so on. Moreover, the inherent optimism of the Beyond Enterprise makes it difficult to reconcile it with theories stemming from the pessimistic theme of 'disenchantment' (to use Weber's term). This raises the question of the precise roles and mutual relationship of the critical and the hope components. Disenchantment-motivated approaches tend to deepen and extend the critical component, to the point of making hope all but impossible. Beyond-motivated approaches, on the other hand, must sustain hope, and hence their critical components, even when quite radical, always preserve a 'constructive' character; as a result, the product — the alternative view or theory they propose — may often contain elements of the criticized one, in a spirit of constructive eclecticism.

In addition, the non-linear view of progress and the historicist leaning of the Beyond Enterprise are, of course, intrinsically anti-positivistic. For a positivist to write a *Beyond ...* book would be almost a *contradictio in adjectio*. Almost but not quite. For one thing: Skinner wrote such a book. And this is as it should be. For a metaphor generates a relatively tight conceptual structure and highlights a number of central themes. But the users of the metaphor always have a margin of freedom in its interpretation — including the choice of those themes they see as more central than others. The advantage of resorting to a metaphor-based epistemological analysis lies precisely in that one thereby abandons the positivist dogma according to which the only philosophically respectable concepts are those precisely defined by means of sufficient and necessary conditions.

Fourth, given its widespread and natural use to conceptualize inquiry, 'beyond' belongs perhaps to a set of 'foundational metaphors' in the Western way of understanding intellectual life. Other possible members of this set are 'content' (which rules over the whole domain of meaning), 'field' (which organizes knowledge territorially into disciplines, departments, etc.), and 'conduit' (which controls our views on the storage, retrieval, and communication of information and knowledge). It would be extremely important to clarify this 'foundational status' some metaphors achieve; to analyze their interrelations; and to compare the current Western set of foundational metaphors with those of other cultures or of other periods in Western intellectual history.

Notes

1. I also intended to discuss the closely related prefix 'post' in such constructions as 'post-modernism' and 'post-semiotic' (Stewart's term), but due to space limitations this will be left for another occasion.

2. E.g., van Gelder (1994), whose relevance to the topic of this book is enhanced by its purport of going "Beyond symbolic".

3. This reminded me that I also have a book (Dascal 1983) in a series called *Pragmatics and Beyond*!

4. Here too I am representing — to some extent — "the symbol model", in so far as I am claiming that a title bears an intentional 'message', that the reader is supposed to find out. If you buy, say, Marguerite Duras' *L'Amante Anglaise*, you expect to read something about the love life of some English woman. When you discover, after going through more than half of the book, that it deals with an abhorrent murder, where no love nor English women are involved, you begin to look for an explanation — a 'meaning' — for this *mismatch* between the title and the contents. You may rest content with saying that this is just another gimmick of a *Nouveau Roman* author to puzzle her readers or to attract attention. But if you look further, you discover some *clues* as to how to interpret the title in connection with the contents. To make a long story short (for details, see Dascal and Weizman 1990), Claire, the murderer, often misspells certain words; she is interested in plants, especially in "menthe" (mint), and she grows mint "en glaise" (in potter's clay). So, the 'real' title of the book — if you can say so — is "La menthe en glaise" (The mint in potter's clay) and the actual title is a (deliberate, of course) misspelling of that (both phrases sound exactly alike). Does this mean that the book is about mint cultivation? Certainly not. The book is, broadly speaking, about misspelling: i.e., misrepresentation: about the fact that different persons represent the same event (the murder) along completely different lines, so that no account is an 'objective' rendering of reality. Perhaps this book too belongs to the Beyond Enterprise. Its title might have been 'Beyond Objectivity'.

5. Even though Kaufmann's book does not have 'beyond' in its title, but rather 'without' — which might suggest an exclusive focus on the critical component — it contains also the hope component. Not only does it develop an alternative to what is "left behind", but also emphatically describes it as "new": "...[to] develop a new conception of autonomy — a new integrity — a new morality" (ibid.).

6. This is an example of what Grice (1975) calls a *conversational* implicature. The implicature conveyed by the linguistic order of the elements (as in the title —> subtitle case) belongs to the class of *conventional* implicatures. For example, *and* carries a conventional implicature of temporal succession: "They got married and had many children". But this can be canceled: "They got married and had many children, but not in that order".

7. Presumably it belongs to the class of what Grice (1975) calls 'conventional implicatures', rather than to the class of 'conversational implicatures'. For more details on the notion of implicature and, in general, on pragmatics, see Dascal (1983).

8. For the notions of 'layer of meaning' and 'entrenchment', see the "onion model" of meaning proposed in Chapter 6.

9. Notice here the interesting asymmetry between X and Y in the title "Beyond X and Y". One of them having already been left behind, it is the other that now requires attention. For further remarks on the addition of Y to the construction, see note 19.

10. This is only one of the many metaphors of movement abundantly used in Freud's book. See section 4 for a quote from Freud on the metaphorical nature of scientific language.

11. Notice here the reliance on another spatial metaphor, that of the container, whose impact on the philosophy of mind has been devastating.

12. On this and other motives in the deconstructionist êthos, see Dascal (1989a).

13. In the unpublished project of a preface, the goal is depicted as follows: "I want to found a new caste, an order of superior men where minds in despair will be able to look for advice; men who like me will live not only beyond political and religious confessions, but who will also have gone beyond morality" [from Nietzsche's *Werke*, vol. 14, p. 414].

14. It is the emphasis on the common ground shared by Freud and Marx that allows for Fromm's synthesis to be developed. This is a further indication of the predominantly "building" (hope) character of the text. There is no attempt to claim that the axis Freud-Marx itself is to be overcome by such a synthesis. Its basic categories are all right as far as they go: 1. the critical mood; 2. humanism; 3. liberating power of truth. What needs to be done is simply to polish this axis, eliminating apparent irregularities ("contradictions") in it.

15. In certain cases, linguistic innovation is deliberately used as a manipulative device, designed to create the *impression* of transcending 'retrograde' doctrines as well as a means to acquire control over the novices in the purportedly new doctrine. A case in point is Scientology. For an analysis of its manipulative use of linguistic innovation and other linguistic devices, see Dascal and Mishori (1999) and Mishori and Dascal (1999).

16. On this last point, see Dascal (1989a).

17. See, for example, Miller and Johnson-Laird (1976), Talmy (1983), Langacker (1987, 1991), Levinson (1992), Svorou (1993), Goldberg (1995).

18. See, for example, Lakoff and Johnson (1980), Johnson (1987), Lakoff (1987), Lakoff and Turner (1989), Turner (1993), Gibbs (1994). For applications of this perspective to philosophical issues, see Chapter 21.

18. This terminology is that of Langacker. Talmy (1983) employs the terms 'ground' (= LM) vs. 'figure' (= TR), being followed in this by Levinson (1992). Wildgen (1994) makes use of the LM-TR labels.

20. The frequent use, in the sample of texts I have singled out, of the expansion of the basic 'beyond X' to 'beyond X and Y' raises some questions not handled by Svorou. If Y is conceived as between X and TR, along the line defined by the observer and LM, then the one-dimensional assumption about the LM is preserved. On this reading, X and Y would be sequential steps in the path towards TR. But this interpretation is quite unusual in my

corpus of texts. Normally, X and Y are taken to form a line perpendicular to the line observer-TR. Thus, Y sort of enlarges the LM, thereby also reinforcing its obstructing character. This is the case, for example, in Skinner (1972), Dallmayr (1981), and Nietzsche (1989).

21. This 'experientialist' way of understanding 'naturalness' is not, of course, the only possible way. Lakoff himself admits that the metaphorical structuration of abstract domains of which we do not have existential experiences, must be based on other forms of correlation, presumably logical ones. In fact, the three questions raised in what follows are entirely general, and do not presume experientialist replies. The move described herein, from the personal experience of intellectual progress to the idea of progress of a field of research (an abstract domain), should be more carefully analyzed in terms of non-experiential correlations. For lack of space and simplicity, I will explore here only the experiential notion of naturalness.

22. Cattell's 'Beyondism' seems to capture this purely relational character both linguistically and doctrinally. Linguistically, by nominalizing 'beyond', it manages to focus on the relational element, letting observer, LM, and TR recede into the background. As a doctrine, it emphasizes evolution as such (much as Rousseau viewed man as characterized not by rationality but by 'perfectibility'), regardless of its particular products at any time, as its main component. The risk of this nominalization-cum-doctrinalization of the dynamic-relational element lies precisely in fixing it, thereby converting it in a non-dynamic factor that is liable to block the very dynamism it is supposed to praise.

23. One of the implications of a general constraint on metaphorical mapping recently formulated by Mark Turner forbids "mapping two distinct senses in the source onto one sense in the target" (Turner 1993: 293). In the case we are considering, the converse seems to occur: one sense in the source (the observer-traveler) is successively mapped onto two different senses in the target (the author and the field of inquiry). The questions that arise are: (a) can this occur not successively but in one and the same occurrence of the metaphor? (b) if it occurs, does it violate a corresponding constraint, thus provoking problems of understanding the metaphor?

Chapter 12

Three remarks on pragmatics and literature

As a researcher in pragmatics, I confess that I have mixed feelings — of understanding, enthusiasm, and sometimes concern — vis-à-vis the increasing incursions of literary studies in the area of pragmatics. Understanding — because I believe that the connection between pragmatics and literary studies is natural and even necessary. Pragmatics, after all, is the theory of *all* uses of language. There is no reason to restrict it to the analysis of conversation and to leave literature outside its scope. Furthermore, by including literary discourse, pragmatics is forced to reformulate and deepen its principles, thus enriching and improving itself. On the other hand, it seems to me that an adequate account of literature must include the pragmatic analysis of literary texts, for which purpose it should make use of the conceptual resources of pragmatic theory. Enthusiasm — because such an interaction between these two disciplines confirms my belief in the need and the potential of interdisciplinary cooperation.

My concern derives from the difficulties inherent in achieving *true* interdisciplinarity, in this as well as in other cases. The main problem lies in the assimilation by each discipline of the issues, theoretical aims, and forms of conceptualization of the other. Otherwise, all that is achieved is a loose juxtaposition, with no real inter-penetration (not to say integration) of their conceptual frameworks. Every side continues to do more or less what it had been doing previously, except for some terminological borrowings which are often accompanied by a loss of theoretical rigor, and one is led to ask whether the whole endeavor is worth the effort.

Leaving these worries aside, let us inquire — in an optimistic spirit — what might be the points of contact between pragmatics and the theory of literature with better chances of mutual enriching as well as those likely to raise problems. My remarks, of course, will be based on my own viewpoint on the nature and tasks of pragmatics.

Pragmatics, for me, is the theory whose task is to study the mobilization and use of the linguistic as well as non-linguistic resources we dispose of for

the production, transmission, and interpretation of "meaning". It rests on a fundamental postulate of intentionality, according to which the use of such resources is always an act of an intentional agent who has certain communicative ends and addresses other intentional agents who are capable of recognizing such ends, i.e., the "meaning" conveyed to them. The object of pragmatics — its "ontological niche" — is thus the investigation of the principles that explain the possibility and success of the transmission of communicative intentions. Whereas semantics is concerned with the meaning of *utterances* and *sentences*, pragmatics is concerned with the *speaker's* or *author's* meaning. To be sure, it must take into account the meaning of utterances and sentences, as well as of many other kinds of meaning codified into semiotic and conceptual structures as well as in social relationships. But their role, for pragmatics, is that of "resources" to be exploited and put to use, in a given *con-text* and *co-text*, with the aim of producing and conveying the intended meaning. It is of course legitimate to take any such a resource as the object of research. But one should bear in mind that the results of such a research can only be partial *qua* accounts of the meaning of any piece of discourse. A purely semantic reading of a text, for instance, will no doubt reveal the semantic choices performed by its author; but to reveal the meaning the author intends to convey through such choices is the proper task of a pragmatic reading.

There are today a variety of pragmatic theories, each with its own key concepts and basic principles. Nevertheless, one can discern a widespread consensus regarding the inferential-cognitive nature of the processes through which speaker's communicative intentions are produced and interpreted. Thus, it is generally accepted that, whenever a speaker violates intentionally and recognizably one or more of the cooperative maxims of communication identified by the philosopher Paul Grice, he is taken to intend to convey to an addressee a meaning that is different from the semantic meaning of the sentence uttered. He succeeds in so doing by virtue of the presumption shared by speaker and addressee concerning the ability of both to identify such violations and to take them as points of departure for an "abductive" inference, whose purpose is to reach an interpretive hypothesis of the utterance that fits the conversational circumstances where it was uttered.[1]

There is also considerable agreement across pragmatic theories regarding the socio-epistemic and ethical basic assumptions of communication. Communication is assumed to be a cooperative endeavor. From this it follows that the participants must each contribute to the success of the joint enterprise by

performing communicative acts that advance its joint aims, i.e., that stand in a rational means-ends relationship. Furthermore, the "division of labor" between speaker and addressee must be equitable regarding the onus of ensuring the success of communication. Minimally, this means that the ethics of communication consists at least in two "duties": the (speaker's) duty of making herself understood and the (addressee's) duty of making the necessary effort to understand.[2]

After this very brief sketch of the main assumptions and aims of pragmatics, let us now address the possible contributions of pragmatics to the analysis of literary discourse as well as to the eventual contributions of the latter to pragmatics. It seems to me obvious that the literary text, as any other use of language, consists in an organized combination of linguistic and other means designed to achieve its author's communicative aims. Consequently, the realization that one needs to "speak pragmatics" in the theory of literature is analogous to M. Jourdain's discovery that he had been "speaking prose" all his life.

Molière, as Descartes his contemporary, believed in the universal human ability to reason, and certainly also in the human pragmatic skills, which were clearly required for his audience to understand the irony he put in the mouth of the main character of *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*. He also demanded from his audience a considerable inferential effort in order to realize the meaning inversion that takes place in the play *École des Maris*, already suggested in the ambiguity of its title (a school owned by husbands or a school for husbands?): the future husbands, who are perceived at first as the teachers of their future wives, turn out to be naïve students manipulated by them.

Marguerite Duras demands even more from the readers of her novel *L'amante anglaise*, whose title's literal translation is "The English Lover". As he reads through the book, the reader is likely to feel cheated: he didn't get the merchandise he bought, since among the characters no one is either English or a lover. Since a book's title is usually taken to provide some indication of its content, the gap between the reader's expectations, based on the semantic meaning of its title, and the novel's actual content, leads him to ask what *is* the author's intention. Only at about half of the book the reader discovers the clue: the 'hidden title' of the novel is in fact *La menthe en glaise* ("The Mint in Clay"). The interpretive clue lies in the fact that between the ostensive title and this hidden title, hinted at in the text itself, there is only a phonetic similarity. This is what is supposed to guide the reader in an interpretive process that

allows him to leave aside the initial semantics-based understanding of the book's theme and intent and seek other interpretations, fit to the actual content as well as to the nature of the clue itself, namely, its being a misreading derived from a *jeu de mots*.[3]

Beyond "prose", i.e., beyond the more or less straightforward use of pragmatic tools in the analysis of literary texts treated as any other text, there are all those specific traits that distinguish a literary text from its non-literary counterparts. It is in trying to cope with these traits that pragmatics is likely to be rewarded by its meeting and interaction with the theory of literature. I will point out only three issues that arise in this connection.

First, pragmatic theory developed on the basis of the analysis of the informative aspects of conversation. This has left a major imprint on its principles and concepts. Grice's well-known four maxims, for example, refer to the quality, quantity, relevance, and perspicuity of the *information* conveyed by an utterance, and require that — in all these respects — it be appropriate to the "conversational demand" the utterance is supposed to satisfy. Obviously, such maxims cannot be extended *simpliciter* to texts or discourse (such as the novel or poetry) whose intent is not primarily the transmission of information. In such texts, the demand for veracity ("quality") should be replaced by, at best, a demand for verisimilitude; the demand for providing the exact quantity of requested information should give place for more tolerance vis-à-vis exaggerated or cryptic forms of conveying information; the demand for relevance should allow for a larger than usual measure of hidden, reader-constructed relevance, and for its evaluation in terms of personal experience, feelings, and other not exclusively cognitive parameters; and the demand for perspicuity should be strongly qualified and perhaps entirely replaced by a maxim that expresses the fact that a literary text is expected to employ words, tropes, sentences and textual structures that are rather unusual and non-perspicuous. All these eventual modifications of the maxims have obvious consequences for the nature of the presumed author-reader cooperation and for the division of labor between them and their respective duties regarding understanding each other.

A serious confrontation with literary texts thus forces pragmatics to acknowledge that the validity of its principles, as formulated so far, may turn out to be restricted to a certain kind of texts, rather than — as presumed — universal. This may lead either to the formulation of specific principles for specific kinds of texts or to an attempt to reach a deeper level of generalization

in the formulation of pragmatic principles, if pragmatics does not give up its purpose of developing a really universal theory of language use.

Second, pragmatics has demonstrated and analyzed the essential role of the extra-linguistic context — especially of the situation of utterance — in the determination of the speaker's meaning.[4] But it seems that the written text, particularly the literary text, is not so context-dependent as speech, or at least not in the same way. One of the characteristics of the literary text is that it creates its own context. In other words, it "internalizes" the extra-linguistic context by transforming it into linguistic co-text, that is, part of the text itself. To be sure, it remains connected to the external world's events, places, historical figures, and readers — otherwise it would not be necessary to print in works of fiction a disclaimer regarding their similarity to reality. But its connection with the extra-linguistic world is quite different from that linking an utterance and its "situation of utterance".[5] The latter "anchors" the utterance in the environment and provides essential information for interpreting it. Without such information, the reader of today's Israeli daily newspaper would be unable to understand both the meaning of the front-page headline "NEGOTIATIONS SUSPENDED" and why it occupies such a prominent place. Furthermore, although the dialogical co-text where utterances are often inserted in a literary text contributes pragmatically to their interpretation, one should not forget that the interaction that takes place between the interlocutors in such dialogues is "virtual" (in fact, often faked), and thus differs from the actual interaction that takes place in real conversations. Similarly, the interaction between the author and his readers does not obey turn-taking rules, being remote and entirely asymmetrical — that is, also "virtual".

All of the traits just mentioned grant the literary text a considerable measure of autonomy vis-à-vis key aspects of the context, which requires a thorough rethinking of current pragmatic ideas about the relationship discourse-context.

Finally, as we have seen, pragmatics assumes that language use rests upon the inferential-cognitive capacity of its users. There are reasons to believe, however, that literature "communicates" in ways other than the readers' inferential abilities. It has been argued, for example, that the "reader's response" to a literary text consists in grasping meanings the author intends to convey which are not reducible to a list of propositions.[6] If this is the case, then the mechanism of interpretation responsible for such a kind of response cannot be, strictly speaking, inferential, i.e., a cognitive

process that yields a propositional conclusion. Eventually, such a mechanism can be "cognitive" or involve cognitive aspects in some other sense. But the very extension of the meaning of this term in order to cover specific forms of literary understanding indicates the need to reconsider a basic assumption of contemporary pragmatics. If it turns out that significant aspects of interpreting a literary text bypass the cognitive realm, pragmatics should account for them in terms of a broader conception of the use of language, or else acknowledge that they are outside its scope.

In my view, pragmatics is not imperialistic, and therefore it does not pretend to be the only possible model of interpretation. It does not seek to replace other extant models — such as those used in the social sciences, in psychoanalysis, and in hermeneutics.[7] It is thus perfectly possible that certain aspects of the literary use of language require a model of interpretation of their own, and should remain outside the scope of pragmatics. In any case, both pragmatics and the theory of literature should benefit from the attempt to clarify the borders between them.

I have discussed here three important issues that arise when pragmatics and literary research try to meet. Their common denominator is the fact that a true encounter between disciplines involves the re-examination of the basic assumptions of each of them. I have argued that the results of such a re-examination can be enriching for both, even if its price is to abandon our entrenched dogmas and a thorough reform of the theoretical home where we have been comfortably living for quite a while.

Notes

1. For details and elaboration, see Grice (1989), Dascal (1983), as well as the chapters in Part I of the present volume.

2. I am afraid my exposition here is perhaps too concise to fulfill my duty of making myself understood, but I cannot elaborate upon this here. Jürgen Habermas has written much about the ethics of communication, although his principles are far from being minimalistic as the ones I propose. See, for example, Habermas (1993).

3. For further details on this example, as well as for additional examples, see Dascal and Weizman (1990).

4. For the different roles of different aspects of context, see Chapter 8a.

5. I include under the notion of "utterance" certain forms of written material, such as letters, newspaper articles and news items, etc.

6. See Zamir (1999).
7. See Chapters 9 and 30.

Chapter 13

Understanding controversies

1. Introduction

The bulk of philosophical, literary, scientific — in short, 'learned' — controversies consists in written texts. Each critical move and each reply in a controversy are usually quite elaborate pieces of discourse, departing sharply from the spontaneous exchanges characteristic of face-to-face dialogues.

Nevertheless, some of their typical features can be accounted for by looking at them as (protracted) dialogues and by applying to them the *pragmatic* concepts developed for the analysis of conversation. Still, some striking differences remain, which demand an explanation, for controversies are at best quasi-dialogues. In what follows, I will first point out how the framework of conversational pragmatics can be applied to controversies, and then suggest a way of explaining the remaining differences. Though the claims here made will be illustrated mainly by reference to one philosophical controversy, which I happen to have studied in some detail, I believe they are valid for a broad class of controversies.

2. Insufficiency of a semantic approach

The reason why I will focus on the application of the *pragmatics* of dialogues to controversies is the insufficiency of a purely semantic approach for capturing the peculiar nature of controversies. Semantic accounts usually rest content with characterizing a controversy in terms of the presence of certain logical relations (e.g., inconsistency) amongst the statements made by the disputants. For instance, Nowakowska (1985: 138; 1986: 142) defines a controversy as a dialogue where, at some stage t, an inconsistency arises in the union of the sets of statements of the two interlocutors, each of which is separately consistent. It follows that a necessary condition for a controversy being 'resolved' is that one of the contenders changes her mind, i.e., that her set of statements becomes inconsistent at $t + n$ (for some $n > 1$).

The insufficiency of approaches such as these stems mainly from the fact that they adopt an extremely abstract standpoint, which does not allow for a conceptualization of the distinctive features of controversies. Thus, contrary to the above definition, an actual controversy is never a matter of a *single* difference of opinion on *any* issue. In order to give rise to a controversy, disagreement generally manifests itself in a range of topics, which cluster around some presumed central divergence. Furthermore, controversies are neither easily nor usually resolved by a contender's change of mind, which would mean a neat victory for the other. The positions rather tend to become increasingly *polarized* and *entrenched* and the controversy perpetuates itself in *sustained* debate, ever more *encompassing*. Though difficult to formalize, parameters such as centrality, entrenchment, degree of polarization, breadth, depth, etc. might eventually be added to the formal framework, so as to enable it to establish logical distinctions in the continuum that ranges from, say, mere divergences of opinion to 'true' controversies. Such a move would undoubtedly increase the descriptive adequacy of the formal model. Yet, *per se* it would still be insufficient, for it would leave untouched the assumption that the defining characteristics of controversies are to be found at the level of semantic/logical content.

The difficulty lies in the fact that, in order to determine the core of supposedly substantive oppositions between the opponents' statements, a double abstraction is required. It is necessary (a) to solve all interpretation problems that may arise concerning the intended meanings of the controversy's texts or utterances, and (b) to set aside those elements of the controversy that can be considered as merely 'rhetorical' or otherwise 'external' to the core. Once thus stripped of all interpretation problems and rhetorical elements, controversies may well be amenable to a logical analysis. But who is to perform the stripping and by what criteria? Presumably, some 'neutral ' observer — an 'impartial judge of controversies', in Leibniz's words — endowed with objective and reliable interpretive powers. Yet, anyone who has analyzed actual controversies, must have noticed that the contenders diverge not only regarding 'content', but also about how to interpret each other's claims, about what is substantive and what is just 'rhetorical', about what is to count as a good argument and about the method of solving the dispute.

Controversies rarely, if at all, are confined to the object-level; they spill over to meta-issues as the above. As a result, contenders will hardly accept not only each other's, but also a 'neutral' judge's interpretations and assessments,

unless they are consonant with their own. In fact, charges of misrepresentation, misinterpretation and irrelevance are not peripheral or occasional; they plague controversies at all levels and stages. It is disagreement at these levels — rather than strictly logical inconsistency — that seems to be the stuff out of which actual controversies are made. Any approach that overlooks this fact risks to miss precisely what makes controversies controversial.

3. A pragmatic approach

Pragmatics, in its broadest sense, is a theory of the *uses* of language. Sociopragmatics investigates the social — as opposed to the private, purely mental — uses of language. In a typical social use of language, say, a conversation, interlocutors make use of linguistic expressions having conventional (= semantic, literal) meanings in such a way that they have no special trouble in reacting appropriately (by their own standards) to each other's utterances. In so doing, they display what may be called *understanding*. They do so by sometimes taking the utterances at face value (i.e., by identifying the intended with the semantic meaning) and sometimes not (i.e., by looking for an intended meaning that differs from the semantic one). In order to achieve this, interlocutors must rely not only on the utterances themselves, but also on their co-text and context. That is to say, the relevant kind of understanding is never confined to the comprehension of the semantic content of the expressions used. The ability to recognize such a content is of course necessary for achieving understanding, but it must be always complemented by the ability to determine whether in the context of use one can take the utterance to convey some other intended meaning or not. Pragmatic interpretation is the process whereby this is achieved, and pragmatics' main task — in my view — is to account for this process.[1]

A conversation is, as stressed by Grice, a cooperation game. This fact constrains the contributions to a conversation in several ways. Broadly speaking, it requires from all participants some effort to ensure proper understanding: the speaker should make his contribution understandable to the addressee, and the latter should spend a reasonable amount of energy in trying to understand it properly, i.e., according to the speaker's intentions.

Misunderstandings may of course occur, but they are not the rule. In fact, conversation proceeds on the *presumption* that the cooperation principle is

respected. This is what allows for the pragmatic interpretation of utterances that apparently violate that principle as in fact conveying indirect meanings that ultimately do conform to the principle. One particularly important aspect of that general presumption is the assumption that each contribution to a conversation is somehow *relevant* to the 'purpose at hand' (Grice's 'maxim of relation'). Usually — though not exclusively — the immediate 'purpose at hand' in terms of which the relevance of a contribution is to be primarily assessed, is established by the preceding contribution. Each contribution thus sets up a 'conversational demand' (cf. Chapter 2) to which the ensuing contribution must relate. It is important to realize that this sequential structure of conversations is neither semantic, nor logical, nor 'argumentative', but rather pragmatic, in the sense that it concatenates utterances at the level of their *pragmatic interpretation,* in terms of the pragmatic notions of relevance and conversational demand (cf. Chapter 24). That is to say, an utterance may fit the structure and satisfy the conversational requirements even though it is not semantically, logically, or argumentatively 'appropriate'. In so far as conversations may be said to have a 'grammar' (and I, for one, object to the analogy implicit in using this term), it is essentially a 'pragmatic grammar'.

The main thesis put forth here is that, likewise, a controversy's structure is essentially pragmatic. To be sure, a controversy differs from a conversation in many respects. In particular, it is not a sequence of utterances where the contenders alternate, but rather a sequence of more or less lengthy texts, which may contain responses addressed to several components of the opponent's preceding text(s). Thus, rather than a single 'controversy's demand', there may be a great variety of such demands at every stage of the controversy. This does not imply a deep dissimilarity, however. For, just as in a conversation there may be certain global conversational demands (defined in terms of such things as the general topic(s) under discussion, the format of the conversation, etc.) alongside local demands (as in a question-answer sequence), so too a controversy may display a hierarchical organization of demands, some defined by macro features that constrain each stage, and others more specific, e.g., the need to respond to specific objections. At any rate, it is plausible to say that a controversy unfolds as a crisscross pattern of 'demands' that the contenders attempt first to identify and then to meet with their successive moves, which in turn establish new demands, and so on. What is essential for the analogy with conversations is not strict sequentiality, but the fact that the participants' assessments of each move refer primari1y to their pragmatic

interpretation, both as demand-establishing and as demand-meeting contributions.

4. The problematization of interpretation in controversies

It is not difficult to find in controversies abundant illustrations supporting the above analogy. What is striking is the fact that, whereas in ordinary conversations the identification of conversational demands and the process of pragmatic interpretation run for the most part smoothly and tacitly, in controversies both are pervasively problematized and consequently raised to the level of explicit issues in dispute. I take this fact to be one of the most significant distinctive marks of controversies, which calls for an explanation. Let me first provide some illustrations, taken from the lifelong dispute between Arnauld and Malebranche on philosophical, theological, and other matters (for details see Dascal 1990c).

In the course of their controversy, both Malebranche and Arnauld repeatedly claim that the other has either not responded or not responded pertinently. For instance, Arnauld claims, against Malebranche, that the latter

> ... pour se rendre plus facile la preuve qu'il vouloit tirer ... y entre par un préambule qui change l'état de la question, et qui ne fait point entendre ce qu'il avoit à prouver ... REPONSE: Ce n'est point du tout de quoi il s'agit (OA 38, 713).[2]

To which Malebranche replies:

> Et moi je réponds que c'est uniquement de quoi il s'agit. Il n'y a qu'à lire l'Eclaircissement, pour voir que je parle consequemment... C'est ... lui [i.e., Arnauld] qui change l'état de la question, en m'imposant des desseins que je n'ai point, pour me rendre odieux et ridicule (OM 7, 596).[3]

Notice that such claims are not just *descriptions* of the alleged change in the *status questionis* by the opponent. They are combined with interpretations of the (indirect) significance of such alleged shifts, indicated by such remarks as "in order to make it easier for him to prove", "in order to present me as odious and ridiculous". The alleged inability or unwillingness by the opponent to discuss what is 'at issue', i.e., to address (what each of them perceives as) the controversy's demand at that stage of the argument, becomes thus the object of a process of pragmatic interpretation similar to that applied to the utterances themselves. Both Arnauld and Malebranche certainly accept the version

of the maxim of relevance that requires strict adherence, in the course of an argument, to the "status questionis", especially when it can be characterized in terms of the propositions one is supposed (or purports) to prove. Arnauld has even formulated explicitly such a principle:

> Considerer avec soin, si on a bien posé l'état de la question, et prendre garde, si on ne le change point dans la suite, en passant insensiblement du point dont il s'agit, à un autre point dont il ne s'agit pas (OA 40, 155).[4]

What both do, however, is to exploit alleged violations of this principle by the opponent to their own advantage. And in so doing, it becomes apparent that the determination of the "status questionis" (or of the controversy's demand) at each stage cannot be taken for granted, but becomes itself a controversial issue.

Such disputes can arise also at the macro level, regarding the significance of, say, the act of publishing a critique of one text rather than another. Thus, Malebranche expected Arnauld to react (perhaps critically) to his "Traité de la Nature et de la Grace" (1680). Arnauld, instead, opens the controversy by publishing in 1683 an extensive criticism of a much earlier work of Malebranche, "De la Recherche de la Vérité" (1674). He considers this move relevant also to the theological matters on which they diverge, on the grounds that Malebranche himself claims that the doctrine of the "Traité" is based on the theory of ideas developed in his earlier work. Malebranche rejects Arnauld's contention, and seeks to establish the totally unjustified character of the latter's move. He contends that in the "Traité" he referred only to certain specific points in his "Recherche", and not in a way that makes the former's theses *rely* essentially on the latter's, so that such references could in no way justify Arnauld's launching such a massive attack on the "Recherche" (OM 6, 18-22). Once he is satisfied with his demonstration of the irrelevance of Arnauld's critique for the theological issues which are what he takes to be at stake, Malebranche feels entitled to look for the 'real meaning' of Arnauld's move. He thus assumes that the *ostensive* irrelevance of Arnauld's attack is intentionally designed to lead the reader to figure out its *covert* relevance. That is, Arnauld is depicted by Malebranche as employing the tactics of exploiting the (apparent) violation of the maxim of relevance in order to convey an implicature. Since implicatures are in general easily recognizable, Malebranche goes on and claims that Arnauld's real intentions are "visible" and "not hard to recognize": to present Malebranche as a visionary who disregards the most elementary common sense and is not familiar with theological

writings — intentions which, if achieved, would discredit Malebranche's theory of grace (OM 6, 25). By making explicit Arnauld's intentions Malebranche in fact purports to denounce Arnauld's move as an essentially rhetorical maneuver, devoid of substantive argumentative value, a claim that Arnauld obviously rejects.

We see, then, that not only the determination of the controversy's demand and of the relevant criteria of relevance are open to debate. Even the question of what counts as a 'rhetorical' as opposed to a 'substantive' move is problematized by the controversialists. And for good reason. For, suppose one of them manages to establish that an opponent's argument is 'merely rhetorical', he has thereby exempted himself from the need to take such an argument seriously, i.e., he can simply ignore the conversational demand normally attached to serious objections, namely the need to respond to them. Such a 'normal' obligation derives not only from the principle of cooperation, but also from the more specific formal structure of a controversy, viewed as an example of the genre *disputatio*, where the participants occupy the characteristic roles of "opponent" and "defendant". Dialogical logic, the theory of argumentation and related fields have made important contributions to the elucidation of such roles. But it should be by now apparent that such approaches need to be complemented by taking into account the pragmatic factors highlighted by the above illustrations. For the positions of "opponent" and "defendant" cannot be established on purely formal grounds, since they are viewed by the contenders as 'negotiable', as is clearly shown by their relentless efforts to redefine the issues at stake, thus reframing the dispute to their advantage.

A controversy's demand — no matter which of the contenders' attempts to frame the dispute prevails — cannot be satisfied unless the text or set of utterances that sets it up is understood. Controversies, like conversations, presuppose that the parties are able to achieve some reasonable measure of understanding. Yet, they are plagued, unlike normal conversations, by allegations of misunderstanding, only some of which correspond to what an external observer would consider as 'real' ones. The controversy between Arnauld and Malebranche, two of the greatest minds of the seventeenth century, both devoted to a sincere search of truth and to Catholicism, both sharing a common Cartesian background, abounds in examples of such allegations.

In his first polemic writing against Arnauld, Malebranche alludes to the possibility of the latter's total lack of understanding of his views: "...rien n'est

plus évident, lors qu'on examine son livre, ou qu'il n'entend point mes sentiments, ou que ce n'est nullement l'amour de la vérité qui le fait parler" (OM 6, 11).[5] In his last writing, he gives a more subtle version of essentially the same dilemma: assuming (a) that Arnauld couldn't possibly read Malebranche's books without understanding them, and (b) that he is endowed with good faith, equity, and wit "at least as much as any other person", Malebranche proclaims that he can

> démontrer invinciblement ... ce paradoxe, qu'il [Arnauld] a composé tant et de si gros volumes contre les miens sans se donner la peine de les lire, qu'il a travaillé sur des faux mémoires, ou sur des extraits mal copiez, ou malicieusement tronquez: ou bien qu'il n'est point véritablement l'Auteur des Livres qui portent son nom (ON 9, 1046).[6]

While Malebranche, seeing himself as the "defendant", invokes both in his opening and in his closing statements in the controversy the *reader's* duty to understand properly a text he purports to criticize, Arnauld, taking the position of the "opponent", had opened his critique by invoking the *writer's* duty to make himself clearly understood. He accused Malebranche of equivocating on key terms, such as the term *idea*, even when challenged to make his meaning clear:

> ...dans le lieu oú il étoit le plus obligé de bien démêler l'équivoque qu'il avoit laissé en plusieurs endroits dans le mot d'*idée*, il le fait si imparfaitement, qu'on en demeure plus incertain de ce qu'il entend par ce mot... (OA 38, 295).[7]

Malebranche had earlier defended an author's right to use a term ambiguously, on the grounds that it would be stylistically disastrous to attempt to "garder dans ses expressions une exactitude trop rigoureuse" (to stick to an excessively rigorous precision in one's expressions) just because certain vicious critics are likely to hunt for the slightest apparent contradiction. The ambiguity in his own use of *idée,* he argues, poses no problem for a well-intentioned reader, for the co-text always makes "visible" which of the meanings is intended (OM 3, 43-44). Arnauld, of course, considers this inadmissible, and maintains his criticism:

> N'est-ce pas la première règle, pour bien traiter une science, d'en définir les principaux termes, afin d'en fixer la notion à un seul et unique sens, pour peu qu'il y ait sujet d'appréhender qu'on ne les prenne en différentes manieres? (OA 38, 296).[8]

Malebranche's reply to this is very violent: only those who are bad philosophers and have a confused mind due to the excitement of their imagination by their passions — he says — are unable to understand what is so clearly and unambiguously written (OM 6, 151).

And so on and so forth.

In a controversy, the ability and willingness of one's opponent to understand properly what one says "so clearly" is constantly called into question, just as his ability and willingness to acknowledge one's definition of the *status questionis* and to be relevant to it. And such alleged inability or unwillingness is taken as a sign of devious intentions. Rather than following the Principle of Charity, that recommends one to assign to the other the best of intentions and the best possible understanding, participants in a controversy tend to do exactly the opposite. The question is, why?

5. The critical attitude and the quasi-dialogicality of controversies

The answer — or at least part of it — lies, I think, in an appreciation of the intertwined existential and public dimensions of criticism as displayed in controversies.

Anyone who engages seriously in a controversy takes upon himself, as an opponent, the *obligation to criticize* as effectively as possible the other's position, and as a defendant, the *obligation to defend* his own views sternly and thoroughly. One is committed to these obligations not so much because of a "love for truth" (which, however, is often referred to as the sole motivation), but rather because the primary objective of the game, in a controversy, is simply to win. Now, the crux of the matter is that the commitment to win the fight can — and almost necessarily does — conflict with the obligations to understand and to make oneself understood, dictated both by the "love of truth" and by the principles of cooperation and charity. If your adversary has a fairly good argument, which you *must* defeat in order to win, why not represent his argument as less good than it actually is, i.e., why not *misrepresent* it? Straw men are easier to defeat. They are golems one creates and controls. How nice it would be if controversies were in fact faked dialogues, written solely by one of the contenders. Such dialogues have an aura of clarity precisely because the 'opponent' is there only to say and mean exactly what the author wants him to say and mean. Unfortunately, no real adversary likes to be treated as a

straw man. He rather displays a stubborn autonomy, claiming that he knows better than anyone else what *he* means, and that, therefore, you misunderstand and misrepresent him when you replace him by *your* golem.

The commitment to win has a deep-seated existential aspect. For what is at stake is not only some abstract truth, but the contenders' 'reputations' — which is not only a matter of their prestige, but also of their careers, i.e., of their intellectual and sometimes even physical survival.[9] Malebranche is deeply aware of this fact, as are also Arnauld and most controversialists. It is inextricably related not only to the tactics, but also to the strategy and to the very substance of controversies. This is why, as noted by Granger referring to scientific discourses that he classifies as 'polemic', controversies make use of "the whole gamut of pragmatic ploys" (Granger 1985: 342). Such ploys include, alongside with the manipulation of the *status questionis*, appeals to the implicit rules of scientific inquiry, which each contender, of course, explicitates to his own advantage. And often it turns out that "the deeper and more substantial significance of the whole controversy" (ibid: 344), both for the participants and for an acute observer, lies in the very act of deploying such pragmatic ploys.

Controversialists are usually skeptic about the possibility of bringing about a change of mind in their opponents that would 'resolve' the controversy. Referring to the dispute between Pascal and Noel on the possibility of a vacuum, Granger (1985: 342) asks: "Did Pascal really intend to *convince* his interlocutor, to understand his arguments faithfully, to bring him to acknowledge his mistakes, and force him to agree?". And he replies: "Clearly not". Winning a dispute has hardly anything to do with convincing the opponent. Here is where the public dimension of controversies must be taken into account. It is some third party, say the 'learned public', that will ultimately determine who won, and it is to this third party — rather than to the opponent — that a controversialist's discourse is implicitly addressed. Appeals to this third party — usually highly flattering — intersperse controversies:

> Permettez-moi de vous rapporter une règle universelle, qui s'applique à tous les sujets particuliers, où il s'agit de reconnaître la *vérité*. Je ne doute pas que vous n'en demeuriez d'accord, puisqu'elle est reçue généralement *de tous ceux qui envisagent les choses sans préoccupation* (Pascal's letter to Noel, Oct. 29, 1647; quoted by Granger 1985: 344; italics added).[10]

The 'learned public' — though often thus depicted — is not some disembodied 'Court of Reason', guided exclusively by the appreciation of the logical

power of arguments. It is sensitive to such mundane things as prestige, style, passions, etc. Malebranche is certainly right in recalling the influence on the public's judgment of the 'phantom' of Arnauld's fearsome reputation, "qui le précede dans les combats, qui le déclare victorieux, et par lequel je suis déjà depuis trois ans au nombre des vaincus" (OM 6, 34).[11] But the public praises Reason as well. This is why controversies must preserve an argumentative structure, and controversialists do not enjoy an unrestrained freedom in distorting each other's positions. Even though flattery of the public's rational abilities is itself sometimes an effective appeal to emotion, it also reflects the limits within which the game must be played. Without the assumption that there is some (public) 'light', which can prevail over reputational phantoms if employed by *lecteurs éclairées et équitables* (equitable and enlightened readers) in examining carefully and objectively the texts (OM 6, 35), controversies could hardly make sense. What is naïve is to assume also that, under such a light, texts become transparent. No matter how illuminated and equitable the learned public, just as the controversialists themselves, has to interpret pragmatically the texts. And a controversialist's attempts to promote *his* interpretations of the opponent's, as well as of his own positions, should be viewed as part of the means he uses to induce the public to choose those interpretations that will bring him, rather than his opponent, closer to victory.

It is this essential reference to an audience (that usually does not intervene as a full-fledged participant but remains mostly in the background), that requires one to treat controversies not as dialogues (nor as trilogues or multilogues), but rather as quasi-dialogues. This term is intended to convey the idea that, though controversies display a pragmatic structure, which is essentially analogous to that of, say, conversations (disregarding the obvious differences mentioned above), this is not so to speak the full story. The full story is that behind each 'regular', opponent-driven pragmatic constraint, there is a further constraint, presumably of the same kind, but audience-driven. Thus, intelligibility must take into account both the opponent's and the audience's requirements, standards, and background. Similarly, a controversy's demand at a given stage comprises one's construal of both, the opponent's preceding contribution and the audience's perception thereof and consequent expectations. Accordingly, one's reaction to such a demand must somehow fit both construals.

If what I have said above about the dominance of the audience-oriented (winning) — rather than the opponent-oriented (convincing) — motivation

in controversies is true, then one might rightly ask why should the controversy obey both sets of constraints, rather than simply foregoing the opponent-related ones? The reason has already been hinted at: the audience's favor will not be won unless it somehow comes to believe that the game has been played in all fairness by the contenders. This forces each controversialist to at least make believe that he is playing fairly and seriously the cooperative argumentation game. It also explains why it is so tempting to try to discredit one's opponent on this count.

Controversies share their quasi-dialogical character with other kinds of talk exchanges, such as television interviews and debates, public round-tables, courtroom interrogations, theatrical dialogues, literary dialogues, etc. All of them belong to the family of *as if* conversations. It would be interesting to try to characterize their specific differences within this broad genus. As far as I can see at present, a main difference lies in the fact that in learned controversies, the audience-oriented drive is not as apparent as in the other cases. It is assumed (or pretended) that it cannot play an acknowledgeable key role. Consequently, a point can be scored against an opponent by showing that he has appealed too obviously or directly to the audience's favor. Thus, commenting an Arnauld's inclusion of a fake dialogue in one of his polemic writings, Malebranche observes ironically: "Je ne sçai, Monsieur, s'il vous sied bien à votre âge, de feindre des historiettes pour divertir le Public (OM 9, 1008)".[12] In members of the *as if* family other than controversies, the talk exchange is expressly framed so as to make it clear to everybody that it is an *as if* event. Even in these cases, however, the interlocutor-oriented constraints cannot be simply dismissed. It is not surprising then that controversies, where the audience is rarely acknowledged as the primary frame of reference, must retain a pragmatic structure that parallels as closely as possible that of 'real' dialogues. But, however close, such a parallel should not mislead the analyst into forgetting the role of the audience-driven constraints. The controversialists themselves will not let this role be easily overlooked: in their eagerness to unmask their opponents' 'real' audience-driven motivation, they often reveal that they too are, ultimately, driven by the same kind of intentions.

Notes

1. For details, see Dascal (1983). For an application of pragmatic notions to texts, see Chapter 8.

2. "… in order to make it easier for himself to reach the conclusion he seeks … [M.] begins by a preamble that changes the state of the question, and which does not permit to demonstrate what was should be proved … REPLY: this is not what it is all about"

3. "And I reply that this is exclusively what it is all about. It is sufficient to read [my] *Eclaircissement* in order to see that I am speaking consistently … It is … him [Arnauld] who modifies the state of the question, attributing to me intentions I don't have in order to present me as hateful and ridicule".

4. "To consider carefully whether one has correctly formulated the state of the issue, and to take care not to change it in what follows, moving unawares from the point at stake to another which is not at stake".

5. "…when one examines his book, nothing is more evident that he either does not understand my vies or that what prompts him to write is not the love of truth".

6. "prove beyond doubt … the following paradox: he [A.] has written so many and so large volumes against mine without having cared to read them; he has worked based on false recollections or on quotes ill copied or mischievously truncated — or else he is not the true author of the books that bear his name".

7. "…where he was most required to clear up the equivocal use of the word *idea* he had made in several places, what he does is so insufficient that one remains even more uncertain about what he means by this word".

8. "Isn't it the first rule of the proper treatment of a science to define the main terms, in order to establish the corresponding notion in one only and precise meaning, even if there is little reason to fear that it will be understood in different ways?"

9. On the weight of the reputation of its holder in assessing a position, see Dascal (2001).

10. "Allow me to mention to you a universal rule that applies to every subject matter where what is at stake is the recognition of the *truth*. I do not doubt that you would agree with it, since it is generally accepted by *all those who look at things without prejudice*".

11. "…which precedes him in the contests and declares him victorious, and through which for three years I have been considered defeated".

12. "I don't know, Sir, whether it fits your age to feign fables in order to amuse the public".

Chapter 14

Understanding misunderstanding

A. Some questions about misunderstanding

There are many disagreements among pragmaticists about the definition of the discipline. But all would agree — I suppose — that at the very least pragmatics is the comprehensive study of language *use*. Most would also agree that the most important use of language is for the purposes of *communication* between human beings, and that achieving this purpose requires that they reach some sort of understanding. But the endeavor to communicate, like any human endeavor of comparable complexity, can go wrong or amiss in a variety of ways. *Misunderstanding* is one of these ways. As such, it belongs to the "mis-" family — the family of communicative phenomena explicitly marked in English by the very productive prefix *mis-*. Here is a sample of misunderstanding's cousins (most of them listed in the OED): *misacceptation*, *misaffirm*, *misanswer*, *misapprehension*, *mischristen*, *misconvey*, *misdescribe*, *mishear*, *misinfer*, *misinform*, *misintend*, *misinterpret*, *mismean*, *misname*, *misprint*, *mispronounce*, *mispunctuate*, *misquote*, *misread*, *misrepeat*, *misrepresent*, *mis-say*, *mis-spell*, *mis-style*, *mis-swear*, *mistranslate*, *misuse*, *misword*, *miswrite*. What is misunderstanding's position in this family? The "folk-theory" underlying this list of what can go wrong in communication apparently takes into account the following parameters:[1]

- production vs. reception: e.g., *misaffirm*, *misinform*, *misintend*, *mispronounce* vs. *misapprehend*, *mishear*, *misinterpret*;
- the "layer" or "level" of the linguistic phenomenon where the problem occurs: phonology/acoustics [e.g., *mispronounce*, *mis-spell*, *mishear*], graphemics [e.g., *miscopy*, *misprint*, *miswrite*], syntax [*misparsing* — a term employed by Clark (1992: 307)], lexical semantics [e.g., *misacceptation*, *misname*], stylistic choices [e.g., *mis-style*, *misword*], conditions for the performance of speech acts [e.g., *misaffirm*, *mischristen*, *misconsecrate*, *mis-swear*], pragmatics [e.g., *misanswer*, *misintend*, *mismean*],

argumentation/rhetoric [e.g., *misinfer*, *misconclude*, *mispersuade*, *misplead*];

— the kind of norms upon which the evaluation is based — roughly, violation of linguistic/communicative norms ("incorrect") vs. violation of ethical norms ("bad"): *mispronounce* vs. *mis-speak*, *misreport* vs. *mislead*;

— involuntary vs. voluntary: e.g., *mispronounce*, *mishear*, *miscorrect*, *misenglish* [= mistranslate into English], *mispunctuate* vs. *misallege*, *misswear*, *misconvey*.

The conceptual oppositions in this grid are to some extent vague, thus allowing for some flexibility, so that the *mis-* terms are not, for the most part, strictly positioned in any single box. For example, *misrepresent* and *misinfer* can occur both in production and reception; *mistranslate* can involve many of the levels; *misname* can refer to lexical or referential incorrectness but also to ethical impropriety; and most of the items in the list are presumed to occur involuntarily, but they can also be contrived. In spite of this flexibility (or, perhaps, thanks to it), the grid is a fairly good starting point for a more precise conceptualization, of the kind proposed, for example, in Weigand (1999). In particular, it permits to characterize a "standard case" of *misunderstanding* fairly accurately as a communicative phenomenon typically belonging to reception, occurring at the semantic-pragmatic layers of communication, having to do with incorrectness rather than with non-ethical behavior, and being involuntary.

From this relatively uncontroversial starting point, many questions arise that a theory of misunderstanding should address. First of all, how often does misunderstanding occur? I am not aware of statistical data, but it is widely assumed that misunderstanding is ubiquitous (cf. Fraser 1993, for example) — an assumption supported by the availability of specific "repair" structures in conversational turns and their frequent use (cf. Schegloff 1992).

Second, *how often* is misunderstanding detected and corrected, without further damage to communication? Here, current wisdom has it that most misunderstandings are detected immediately after occurrence (second turn), and successfully repaired in the third or forth turn. Bazzanella and Damiano (1999) provide both examples and statistical data supporting this assumption. There are, of course, exceptions, where the misunderstanding persists for several turns, as illustrated by Bazzanella and Damiano's (1999) example 11, by Trognon and Saint-Dizier's (1999) tutorial dialogue, and by Weizman's (1999) fictional dialogue. Whereas in the former two cases, the misunder-

standing is finally resolved, in the last case it remains — at least ostensively — unresolved. It thus deserves the label *miscommunication* — also used by Weigand to indicate a breakdown in communication caused by sustained misunderstanding.

Third, *how* is misunderstanding managed? Trognon and Saint-Dizier (1999), as well as Bazzanella and Damiano (1999), concentrate on this question, and provide detailed analyses of misunderstanding-management, each using a different conceptual apparatus and emphasizing different aspects. Both stress the dynamic nature of misunderstanding-management, which emerges from their analyses as a cooperative trouble-shooting process, involving one or more "negotiation cycles", through which "coming to an understanding" (Weigand 1999) is sought and achieved. Trognon and Saint-Dizier examine the underlying logic of the cognitive processes through which a misunderstanding arises, is recognized, and resolved, employing the framework of their "interlocutionary" approach. Bazzanella and Damiano address such macro-questions as at what stage and by whom is the misunderstanding recognized and resolved, employing a corpus of natural conversations, and relying mainly upon ethnomethodological theory. Both discuss the different levels at which misunderstanding may arise and stress the role of non-linguistic factors in its management.[2]

Fourth, what are the *causes* of misunderstanding? This question is closely related to the question of the *types* of misunderstanding. Bazzanella and Damiano (1999) provide a useful classification of causes — which they call "triggers": structural, related to the speaker, to the interlocutor, and to the interaction between them. Ambiguity — often pointed out as a main cause of misunderstanding — belongs to the first category. Presumably, cultural differences (such as Tannen's (1990) differences between male and female communicative "styles") belong to the last category. Weigand (1999) offers a distinction between means (linguistic, visual, cognitive) and purposes (action function, referential function, predicative function), and shows how misunderstanding can be due to problems in either or in both. She stresses as a main source of misunderstanding the fact that the "cognitive means", such as habits and inferential patterns, cannot be applied automatically, but are at most context-dependent presumptions which, when inappropriately applied, lead to misunderstanding. The possibility of misunderstanding is ever present because not everything can be explicitly said, and the interlocutor must therefore rely on inferences based on fallible presumptions. Communication, that

is, involves a lot of guesswork, and however "educated" our guesses are, they can miss the mark. Weizman's (1999) analysis of the role of breaches of the "given-new contract" in generating misunderstanding illustrates how such guesswork, even when based upon a structural communicative convention, can in fact be misleading.

What emerges from these and other accounts is that the various causes of misunderstanding (and understanding) interact, either reinforcing or canceling each other. A mispronunciation may engender a miscomprehension, but it can also be automatically corrected by a hearer when the mispronounced expression doesn't fit the communicative intention she/he attributes (correctly or incorrectly) to the speaker; and a (correct or incorrect) attribution of intention or interpretation of a contextual feature may produce a mishearing or a misreading.[3] This implies that a simple sequential processing model beginning, say, with "noise" in the communication channel (or at its production or reception poles) is unlikely to be adequate, because misunderstanding can be either bottom-up or top-down driven.

Fifth, one should inquire about the *logic* of misunderstanding. Is it a binary phenomenon or does it admit of gradation? In so far as there is a tendency in empirical studies to deal only with clearly identifiable phenomena, misunderstanding is treated as a binary phenomenon: it either occurs or not, the best indicator being the participants' own acknowledgment (e.g., through repairs). But, in so far as misunderstanding is subject to "negotiation", as part of an ongoing *process* of "coming to an understanding", it would seem rather to be better viewed as a continuum (as suggested by Bazzanella and Damiano). This seems to be a necessary consequence of the multi-level character of misunderstanding, each level displaying its own criteria of "correctness" of understanding — unless one presumes, like certain versions of speech act theory, that there is one dominant level (e.g., "the point" of an utterance), which alone determines success or failure in understanding. The gradation view is further supported by the fact that, from a logical point of view, misunderstanding and understanding are contraries, rather than contradictory, i.e., the propositions "A misunderstands B's utterance" and "A understands B's utterance" may be both simultaneously true (regarding the same utterance). This may happen, for example, when A understands B's utterance at one level, but misunderstands it at another.[4] This is exemplified in Weizman's (1999) claim that, although at the level of individual communicative intentions Hirshl and Mina misunderstand each other, each of their

utterances contributes to establishing "understanding at the we-level".

Sixth, it is worthwhile to take a closer look at the ethical aspects of communication, as they emerge in the issues raised by misunderstanding. Weizman's (1999) case-study shows that even a misunderstanding-riddled exchange has a *value* for the participants, in so far as it contributes to maintain a basic solidarity between them — a "we" who is capable to endow the exchange with a "collective direction", in spite of the surface difficulties at the level of their conflicting "egos". Trognon and Saint-Dizier (1999) point out that the misunderstanding in their case-study is resolved only when one of the participants finally puts himself (literally) "in the place of the other" (cf. Dascal 1995), being thus able to (literally) *see* what the deictic *devant* refers to *for the student*.

This reaching out towards the other — one might say, this *altruistic* orientation — is inherent to communication *qua* coordinated action, and is essential to the "coming to an understanding" required by communication. To be sure, it could be interpreted (like all forms of altruism) as a purely ego-centered instrumental need, devoid of any ethical significance. From this point of view, communicators — each motivated by his/her individual desire to achieve efficient communication — are bound only by two (not exactly symmetrical, as hinted at by Weigand) "duties": the duty to make oneself understood and the duty to understand (cf. Chapter 4). Both require from the communicators a certain amount of effort — involving cooperation and reaching out — and explain to a large extent their preoccupation with preventing, detecting, and correcting eventual misunderstandings. Were the "ethics of communication" to consist only in this type of norms, it would hardly deserve the name of "ethics". But there is more to it than that. In order to fully comply with the "duty to understand", an addressee must presume that the speaker has, on his/her side, complied with the "duty to make himself/herself understood"; and vice-versa. It is this "benevolent" or "charitable" attitude that allows the addressee to ignore mispronunciations, slips of the tongue, ambiguities, superficial inconsistencies, and other similar sources of misunderstanding, rather than letting them block the flow of communication at every step.[5] The speaker, on his/her side, is normally entitled to presume that the addressee will behave in this way, which is what allows him/her not to be over-concerned (up to a point, of course) to dispel in advance every possible source of misunderstanding — something which is not only "awfully difficult" (Vendler 1994: 19; quoted by Bazzanella and

Damiano 1999), but would also require him/her to achieve the unattainable ideal of total explicitness.

In short, communication rests on mutual *trust* between *responsible* individuals, treated by each other as capable of using reasonably well linguistic and non-linguistic means to convey and recognize communicative intentions. We are, of course, speaking of *presumptions*, which are fallible — which is why misunderstanding actually does occur (sometimes caused by an excess of "charity"). Nevertheless, such presumptions are robust enough not only to ensure reasonably trouble-free communication, but also to view those uses of language that deliberately violate them as *morally* — not just *technically* — wrong, since they involve a breach of trust. The analysis of misunderstandings induced through such *misuses* (i.e., "bad" uses) of language — as in double-talk, demagoguery, some types of advertising, and other forms of deception — cannot, therefore, focus only on the mechanisms involved, but must take into account the moral implications of manipulative practices that evade communicative responsibility, debase the addressees, and jeopardize the communicative mutual respect upon which much of the social fabric depends.

Seventh, a theory of misunderstanding should take a closer look at the "non-standard" cases. Perhaps the consideration of such cases requires substantive modifications of the theory, for they display traits that are incompatible with the assumptions defining the "standard case". Perhaps "non-standard" cases are not marginal or sporadic — as assumed by Weigand (1999) — but rather quite central and frequent. The phenomena mentioned in the preceding paragraph are — unfortunately — quite widespread. The same is true of cross-cultural communication (along with cross-cultural misunderstanding), in this age of communicative "globalization". Perhaps an elaboration of the distinction between "means" and "purposes" (the latter being defined not only in a narrow "functional" or instrumental way, but also so as to allow for moral evaluation) might take care of the former case, while variations in the "cognitive means" along the cultural dimension might take care of the latter case.

But what about the many forms of *conflictual* communication, where the predominant *ethos* is confrontational rather than cooperative? Here misunderstanding looms large, presumably not just as an accident, but by virtue of structural properties of this kind of communication. Consider for example a polemic between a critic of a theory and its proponent.[6] The former aims at undermining whatever support the latter can muster for the theory, while the

latter's aim is to undermine the weight of the critic's arguments. One of the easiest ways to "win the day" (though not necessarily to reach final victory) in such a situation is to focus on infelicities of expression by the opponent, which would normally be "charitably" overlooked or resolved, and to exploit them in order to show inconsistencies, ambiguities, misunderstandings, etc. No wonder that charges or miscomprehension, misrepresentation, misconception, incompetence, misleading statements and ill faith abound in such cases. For polemicists, then, misunderstanding is *used* as a powerful strategic weapon — rather than just *happening*. Perhaps conflictual communication of this sort actually begins due to some accidental misunderstanding. But, contrary to the "standard case", where participants seek to minimize the damage by identifying and correcting the accidental misunderstanding, conflictual communication thrives by nurturing itself in magnifying and exploiting to the bitter end such "accidents". Clearly, the management of misunderstanding, its voluntary or involuntary nature and its logic are quite different in both cases. As far as I know, there are no statistical data on the frequency of conflictual communication, but it is certainly a widespread phenomenon. A pessimist might even consider it — rather than the harmonious endeavor to "coming to an understanding" — as "the standard case". And she/he might underscore such a pessimism by pointing out that, instead of the altruistic drive towards the other, characteristic of cooperative communication (which is — for the pessimist — exceptional), we rather want to protect ourselves as much as we can from the other's intrusive (and communication is always intrusion, for the pessimist) interventions — which is why we protect ourselves behind a veil of misunderstanding.

Finally, theories of misunderstanding should at some point — the earlier the better — exercise some measure of self-awareness and self-criticism regarding their assumptions, objects, methods, aims, and discourse. Especially when — as fit at the present time — conventional wisdom in all these respects is challenged. One such challenge is Taylor's (1992) elaborate analysis of the *rhetorical* function of intellectual metadiscourse (i.e., "theorizing") about understanding (and misunderstanding). According to Taylor, "the rhetorical source of intellectual metadiscourse lies in the treatment of locutions of practical metadiscourse ('metadiscursive commonplaces') as general, empirical hypotheses" and evaluating them accordingly (15). Intellectual metadiscourse thus stems from "the treatment and evaluation of practical metadiscourse as a *primitive theory of language*: a 'folk linguistics'" (ibid.).

Following Wittgenstein, Taylor contends that *practical* metadiscourse, in its context of use, is unproblematic. Problems arise when its expressions are decontextualized from their "ordinary rhetorical contexts" and then recontextualized "within the rhetorical context of intellectual inquiry" (13),[7] for, within this new context, a "scientific foundation" is sought for what neither needs nor bears "improvement", "correction", or "foundations". He singles out for analysis "metacommunicational discourse", i.e., "discourse referring to the success or failure of communicational understanding" (17), which, in its intellectual — but not in its practical — version is concerned with three main questions: do communicators ordinarily understand each other?; what is it for communicators to understand each other?; and how communicational understanding occurs? (20).

Needless to say, both the procedure (starting with "folk theory") and the questions mentioned by Taylor, which are explicitly formulated in the present paper and in other work on misunderstanding, indeed underlie much current theorizing on misunderstanding and on communication in general. Furthermore, his conclusion that, instead of improving understanding and ensuring progress through its emulation of the empirical sciences, such theorizing is in fact "a dialogic 'game' which provides only the illusion of progress and which inevitably ends in either mutual misunderstanding or rhetorical vacuity" (239), poses a serious challenge that certainly deserve more attention than it can receive in this essay. I will try to approach this challenge by way of pinpointing some difficulties — perhaps misunderstandings — that arise in attempts to face it.

The main question of interest — we might say — is whether by revealing the rhetorical origins and function of metacommunicative discourse (assuming that his analysis is correct) Taylor shows that theorizing in such a way is in some sense "wrong" and should be therefore abandoned. To ask this question, however, is to misunderstand the aims and the rhetoric of the kind of analysis masterfully exemplified by Taylor's book. In fact, he is quite explicit about that. His aim, he says, is not to "*evaluate* or *criticize*" metacommunicational discourse in terms of its truth, justification, evidential support, etc. (p. 18; cf. also p. 252). Nor will he provide any *argument* about "the truth or falsity of particular language theories, or indeed of language theory in general" (ibid.). "The point of the exercise is ... not truth, but (rhetorical) consequences" (24). What the exercise is intended to provide, then, is a description of the rhetorical situation within which theories of (mis)understanding are developed. It

does not purport to show that such theories are false or to argue against them, because to do so would be to participate in the very "language game" it seeks to describe, namely, the game of providing *the* correct picture of reality. Instead, by showing how the "picture" proposed by communicational metadiscourse is constrained by a certain rhetorical situation, Taylor's analysis is supposed to free the reader from the grip of such a picture (based on the belief that it is dictated by "reality"), who can then become receptive to alternative ways of seeing communication and language (which the book does not attempt to spell out) — none of which, of course, should claim to be "true".[8]

What is, then, the rhetorical situation that gives rise to metacommunicational theoretical discourse? It arises, according to Taylor, in the context of a continuing battle between "a stubborn communicational sceptic and ... the communicational theorist" (24). Such a skeptic, who either denies the hypothesis that communicators ordinarily understand each other or simply suspends judgment about it for lack of proof, functions as a "dialectical adversary, opposition to wh[om] provides the rhetorical motivation for the construction of a language theory as an explanatory bulwark against the threat of skeptical confusion" (21). Although metacommunicational discourse is based on commonsense, for which the hypothesis in question is unquestionable, the communicational theorist cannot simply appeal to commonsense in order to defeat the skeptic. Just as G. E. Moore's pointing to his hand does not count, for a skeptic, as a proof of the existence of the external world and of our knowledge thereof, so too pointing to millions of cases of the happy resolution of misunderstandings in everyday conversations does not count as a proof that understanding "really" occurs in such cases. To persuade a skeptic to abandon his doubt more is required than blind allegiance to commonsense, which is a mark of "dogmatism" — what is needed is "scientific" justification. The need for theory thus arises, according to Taylor, due to the rhetorical choice of the skeptic as dialectical opponent. And, in so far as the kind of theorization chosen is "empirical", on the model of the natural sciences, further (rhetorically motivated) features are entailed — e.g., the objectification of the phenomena investigated, segmentation and decontextualization as preferred methods of "observation", and the exclusion of all aspects of communication that could — even with the best theoretical precautions — be vulnerable to skepticism.

Withstanding skepticism is, thus, the motivation, the aim, and the litmus test of metacommunicational theories and, according to Taylor, they all fail to

pass this test. This seems to be a factual claim that would deserve careful consideration. But, in the context of Taylor's approach, can it really be understood and examined as a factual claim? Should his interesting claims about, say, "pragmatic theory" and its failure to pass the skeptical test, be discussed in familiar argumentative ways? No doubt he displays familiarity with the texts as well as considerable imagination and persuasive skill, in his examination of the way in which the most diverse theories of language deal with (mis-)understanding in terms of his rhetorical mold. No doubt what emerges from the book is a *possible* picture of a rhetorical battle responsible for some features of such theories. Personally, I consider it essential — for a proper understanding of a theory — to consider it in its dialectical context. But I mean by that its *actual* confrontation with its *actual* opponents. However, instead of examining the rhetorical strategies employed in actual confrontations, Taylor at best substantiates his abstract rhetorical picture through a selective reading of isolated texts. If this is not the kind of decontextualization he so much criticizes, perhaps I have misunderstood him. My misunderstanding may be even deeper for I took his rhetorical reconstructions of those theories to involve some sort of truth claim that could be defended or criticized in the light of textual and contextual evidence. Probably I am simply relapsing in my old metacommunicational cognitive habits: to look for a "proper understanding" of a theory; to require the empirical analysis of communicational exchanges; to demand historical accuracy; to argue, to criticize, etc. — certainly a grossly inappropriate approach towards a theory (can one use this term?) that shuns all these habits.

Like Taylor, I have used exaggeration in order to highlight the difficulties of "coming to an understanding" across radically different "pictures", "conceptual frameworks", "research programs", or "rhetorical situations". Such difficulties illustrate how far and deep misunderstanding may go. But I think there can be no reasonable doubt that each of us has — at least partially — understood the other. And a theory of *partial* (mis)understanding is, as argued above, all a reasonable metacommunicational theorist who is not conducting a Quixotic war against a "stubborn skeptic" should reasonably expect to achieve.

B. The relevance of misunderstanding

1. There has been a lot of discussion, among linguists and among philosophers, about the nature of understanding and its relation to meaning, but little or no attention has been paid so far to misunderstanding.[9] Presumably, the reason for such a neglect lies in the assumption that misunderstanding is nothing but some sort of defective or deviant understanding, and thus easily definable in terms of the latter plus some conveniently chosen form of negation. As soon as a satisfactory theory of understanding became available, it would be possible, one thought, to account without difficulty for misunderstanding as well. I confess that, to some extent, I shared this presumption, which I now consider somewhat naïve. In fact, when I first thought of writing this paper, my intention was to present a number of cases of misunderstanding, related to the different 'layers' of significance of an utterance, in order to show thereby that such layers are quite 'real' and must be taken into account in any theory of understanding. I was, thus, taking misunderstanding to be relevant to a theory of understanding much in the same way as pathological behavior is often said to be able to illuminate the nature of 'normal' behavior, namely, in an indirect and external way.

I had, however, some reason to believe that this was not the only use an analysis of misunderstanding might have in connection with an account of understanding. Indeed, I myself had shown earlier (see Chapter 2) that, at least in one kind of understanding, namely the understanding of Gricean implicatures, the notion of misunderstanding played a key role. So much so that I then suggested the inclusion of a special 'rule' — 'Check for misunderstanding' — in the set of heuristic devices designed to account for the interpretation of such implicatures.

As I probed deeper into the examples of actual and imaginary misunderstanding I intended to discuss, it became clear to me that the connections between understanding and misunderstanding were both more intimate and more complex than I — and many others — had previously assumed. Besides its key role in the functioning of such admittedly 'pragmatic' phenomena as the Gricean conversational implicatures, it became apparent to me that the

notion of misunderstanding was also required for an account of several other linguistic phenomena, currently associated with semantics rather than pragmatics. If I were to express this in a short and somewhat paradoxical formula, I would say that it now seems to me that *a significant part of understanding speech has to do with misunderstanding*.

In this paper, I will be concerned mainly with substantiating this claim via instantiation. A few tentative hypotheses about the different roles of linguistic devices, which have to do with what might be called 'the management of misunderstanding in conversation', will be put forward. The approach, as will be easily noticed, is eclectic, drawing from a number of different theoretical frameworks (e.g., frame semantics, speech act theory, the theory of conversational implicatures, fuzzy set theory, and recent discussions of the rules approach to communication). I wish I had more empirical data, such as actual recordings of conversations where misunderstandings occur. In the absence of such data, I had to content myself with cases reported in the literature, cases directly reported to me by the participants themselves, and some imagined cases. I believe, however, that hypotheses generate data more often than data generate hypotheses.

2. Any utterance of, say, an English sentence, conveys to its hearer or, more generally, to its interpreter a 'significance' that goes far beyond what is commonly described as the 'meaning' of the sentence. Whereas the so-called meaning is usually confined to the 'propositional content' of the sentence, the significance of the utterance of the sentence includes many other factors besides such a propositional content: the reason for the speaker's utterance (which may involve either the 'point' of the utterance or its 'motivation' or both), the illocutionary force of the utterance, the degree of commitment of the speaker to what he said (what Hare used to call the 'neustic' associated with the utterance), the indirect messages — such as the 'conversational implicatures' — that the utterance may or may not convey (intentionally), the unintentional information about the speaker and his beliefs that can be gathered from the utterance, etc. I think there is good reason to believe that, although consisting of a somewhat open-ended set of factors, the significance of (at least the intentional part of) an utterance is fairly well structured in an onion-like way. The various factors mentioned constitute 'layers' of significance. The innermost ones are those related to 'propositional content' and are usually dealt with by semantics, whereas the outermost ones (e.g., the ones

related to conversational implicatures) have been traditionally assigned to pragmatics. Naturally, there has been much debate about the intermediate layers (e.g., illocutionary forces), and so far there is no agreement as to whether they belong to semantics or to pragmatics. We need not concern ourselves with this debate in the present context, provided we assume that such layers can be discerned and that the interpretation of an utterance cannot, in principle, neglect any one of them, if the utterance is to be 'fully understood'.[10] In order to simplify, let us say with Fillmore (1976: 78; emphasis mine) that "... whenever we are interpreting what somebody has said or written, there are *four questions* we have to answer for ourselves:

(I) What did he say?
(II) What was he talking about?
(III) Why did he bother to say it?
(IV) Why did he say it in the way he said it?"

These questions — not all of them unambiguous — identify some of the layers of significance we have been talking about. The first one has been addressed by traditional semantics, linguistics as well as philosophy. The second one is being addressed by current, extended versions of semantics, such as Fillmore's own 'frame-' or 'scene-semantics'. The third one, as Fillmore points out, leads into strongholds of pragmatics — speech act theory and the logic of conversation; and the last one, into rhetoric.

Regardless of whether these disciplines are clearly distinguishable, and whether the questions offer reliable ways of distinguishing the layers of significance of an utterance, the latter can serve as a guide to indicate what is involved in understanding an utterance, and — for our purpose here — as a guide for identifying various forms of misunderstanding. For, clearly, misunderstanding may arise from giving the 'wrong' answers to any one, or any combination of questions (I)—(IV). In our terms, misunderstanding can arise in any of the layers of significance. A first step in analyzing misunderstanding is then to identify the layer in which it arises. Unfortunately, as the examples will make clear, in most cases more than a single layer is involved. In fact, misunderstanding — as understanding — results from particular forms of *interaction* between the different layers. The analysis, therefore, requires not only the identification of the layers, but also a description of the mechanisms of interaction involved, since their malfunction may be the cause of misunderstanding.

My concern will be primarily with misunderstanding in conversation, although I will occasionally mention written texts. In conversation, the utterance of a speaker A, in conjunction with the properties of the context and co-text in which it is uttered (e.g., its 'position' in the course of the conversation), establishes what I have called a 'conversational demand' (cf. Chapter 2). It is with respect to such a demand that the appropriateness of the interlocutor's (B) response will have to be judged (by A, primarily). Now, B's response is in fact a response to B's perception or interpretation of A's utterance and of the conversational demand it establishes. In other words, B's response is a function of (among others) the answers B gives to the four questions, as applied to A's utterance. This amounts to no more than the old truism: 'Every organism responds to a *proximal* rather than to a distal stimulus', which, nevertheless, is at the rock bottom of any account of misunderstanding.

The appropriateness of B's response will crucially depend upon his ability to provide an interpretation of A's utterance that comes reasonably close to A's interpretation of his own utterance. Some authors have described this requirement in terms of 'correspondence of information': "Theoretically speaking, successful communication takes place when correspondence of information between the two persons has been established" (Ruesch 1972: 37). But 'information' here must be taken in a very broad sense, for what is at stake is the correspondence between A's and B's perception of a 'conversational demand', i.e., of something that involves not only 'information' in the sense of 'propositional content', but also injunctions to act in particular ways (among them, injunctions to perform speech acts belonging to certain categories but not to others), the use of certain rules and principles of behavior, etc. In fact, the required correspondence would involve, to some degree, all of the layers of significance mentioned above. To be sure, we never require or act upon 'full' (whatever that may mean) understanding, so that the 'correspondence of information' need not be a full correspondence. As has often been pointed out, we usually respond selectively to any set of stimuli, and linguistic stimuli are no exception. We may ignore some of the layers of significance and focus our response on others, and those we acknowledge may be acknowledged only partially.[11] The correspondence required is, thus, clearly approximate or fuzzy in nature. Nevertheless, when B's interpretation of A's utterance is *grossly* at variance with A's intended interpretation, B's response is likely to be inappropriate, as assessed by A, and a misunderstanding may arise. Usually, it will also

be possible to detect the layer or layers responsible for the misunderstanding and, accordingly, to produce the relevant corrections.

Let us consider now a few cases that illustrate misunderstandings related to the various layers of significance.

Lexical ambiguities can produce misunderstandings that may be related to Fillmore's first question, although more often than not they don't, since the sentences containing the ambiguous expressions are easily disambiguated by both context and co-text. The following example might also be thought of as belonging to 'semantics' proper:

(1) /V, a foreign dance therapist, comes to a group therapy session in a Berkeley hospital, as an observer. She is not introduced by the therapist in charge. After some time of participation in the group's activities, the following conversation develops between V and one of the patients/
V: /having noticed the patient's peculiar English accent/:
Where are you from?
P: I am from Malta. And you?
V: I am from Israel.
P: How long are you staying here?
V: About two more months.
P: Haa-uh ... / raising intonation, expressing 'sympathetic understanding and pity'/. I am here only for two weeks.
V: Oh, no! I am *here* just for this session.

The misunderstanding in the above example may be thought of as located in the indexical word *here*: V and P merely assigned different referents to this indexical, namely, 'the U.S.' (or 'Berkeley') and 'this hospital', respectively. Although indexicals were one of the first topics of pragmatics, dealing properly with indexicals is a matter of assigning *referents*, a topic that belongs in fact to the theory of reference, a traditional part of semantics. On closer examination, however, it must be acknowledged that the misunderstanding in (1) is intimately related to Fillmore's second question, the one that requires an 'extended' semantic treatment. V's first question is framed within the 'acquaintance' scene or schema, one of whose dimensions has to do with 'place of origin', 'place of permanent residence', 'sojourns out of place of permanent residence', etc. V continues to operate within such a scene throughout the whole conversation (except for her last utterance). P, however, shifts abruptly from the scene in question to a completely different one, the 'internment' scene, where duration of internment correlates with seriousness of disease, as

well as with the relative 'status' of patients. The different referents assigned to *here* have to do, therefore, with the different scenes the two speakers are 'talking about'. Such a shift of scene, on the part of P, would usually have been signaled somehow by some device intended to prevent misunderstanding. Eventually, P's lack of concern for providing such a signal might be an indication of some disturbance of his communicative competence.

The following cases are related to Fillmore's third question. All of them have to do with 'the point' of the utterance, albeit in different ways. As in the case of lexical ambiguity, so-called 'indirect speech acts' rarely produce actual misunderstanding. The 'indirectly' conveyed illocutionary force is easily determined. So much so that most people construe (2) below not as a misunderstanding concerning the illocutionary force of A's utterance, but as a (bad) joke:

(2) A: Can you pass the salt?
B: Yes, I can. /No action performed/

In (3), as well as in (4), the illocutionary force is correctly identified as that of a question:

(3) /Teacher, demonstrating a swinging movement of both arms, asks a student/
T: And now, what am I doing?
S: You are getting yourself into the right mood.

(4) /Priest, visiting a convicted burglar in jail/
P: Why did you rob the bank, my son?
B: 'cause there is where the real dough is.[12]

Yet, the 'point' of the question is not correctly identified, insofar as the *set of possible answers* the speaker has in mind diverges considerably from the one the hearer reacts to. In (3), T probably wants some sort of a description of the physical characteristics of the movement performed, rather than of its intention. An answer such as *You are showing us one kind of movement* would be as off the mark as the answer the student actually gave, and would belong, I presume, to the same set of alternatives she considered in giving her answer. In (4), the notion of contrastive stress could be helpful in describing the misconstrual of the set of possible answers. Whereas in P's question the contrastively stressed element is, say, *rob*, or perhaps the whole phrase *rob the bank* — a fact that indicates that it is alternatives to those elements that the

priest has in mind (such as *work* or *earn your money honestly*), the burglar construed the stress as placed on *the bank,* and produced an explanation relevant to the set of alternatives including, say, the bank, the supermarket, the saloon, etc.

The next example, from Laing (1976: 136), although related to the above and to Fillmore's third question, shows how attention to the *fine* structuring of a conversation in terms of 'conversational demands' is required in order to prevent misunderstandings:

(5) He: I have two daughters. I've trained them both not to be interested in sex. Both are 'tops' in their different academic fields now.
Me: Are they?
He: What?
Me: Interested in sex?
He: No. Both are safely married.

One of the characteristics of a conversational demand-reaction pair seems to be its 'immediacy'. A reaction must be appropriately timed to the conversational demand it is a reaction to.[13] Otherwise, misunderstanding may arise. And there seems to be a conversational principle to the effect that it is always the 'last' or most recent demand that must command the interlocutor's response. Now, consider the first utterance in (5). It contains three assertions. Normally, it would be the last of these assertions that should establish the conversational demand to which Me would have to react. Me, however, chose to react to the second assertion, without signaling his intention (apparently). Normally, in the absence of such signaling, He should interpret the reaction as a reaction to his third assertion. But the propositional content of that assertion is such that an *Are they?* reply could be only interpreted (depending on its intonation contour) either as a polite (and uninterested) comment or as a questioning of the truth of the assertion. Both interpretations would require specific intonation contours, which differ markedly from a regular information question contour. Given such conflictual information, He, instead of reacting on so uncertain grounds, uses a misunderstanding-preventing device. Notice that the questioning of the second assertion by *Are they?* has none of the possible readings above (polite comment and questioning of truth), but can be easily interpreted as a real information question, since it refers to the possible outcome of the process of training rather than to the fact that such a training took place.

It is often difficult to distinguish between a failure to grasp the 'point' (and the associated 'conversational demand') of an utterance, and a deliberate avoidance to relate one's reply to that 'point'. Consider, for instance:

(6) /Johnny comes running toward his mother, joyously shouting/
J: Look, I caught a worm!
M: /dry/ Go wash your dirty hands.

Ruesch (1972: 54-55) calls M's reply a "tangential remark", since it focuses upon an aspect of J's utterance which is quite marginal with respect to its intended 'point'. Now, either the mother did not at all perceive J's enthusiasm, which called for another kind of comment, or else she deliberately ignored it, in which case her utterance might eventually be viewed as conveying an implicature. The latter possibility exists only insofar as M's reply bears some relationship — albeit marginal — to J's utterance.

The following case still belongs, in my opinion, to the cluster of issues subsumed under Fillmore's third question:

(7) /At the swimming pool, lunch is served; A and B have just met for the first time/
A: Doesn't this grapefruit taste stale? I bet you it's canned.
B: Grapefruits grow all around us. Why should they use canned juice when fresh fruit is available?
A: Oh, well, I guess I just don't care for juice today.

According to Ruesch (1972: 81-82), "A interpreted the 'stale' literally and reacted to the idea of canned versus non-canned fruit. She overlooked the fact that the other woman wanted to say something like 'I don't like grapefruit juice' or 'The food is not very good here' or 'Why do they serve this sort of thing?' or perhaps she simply wanted to make conversation. As a rule this patient has a tendency to seize the literal and denotative meaning and to overlook the connotative aspects of the spoken word". What seems to happen here is similar to what happens in (2), namely, an incorrect assessment of the illocutionary force of the remark. Dealing with this misunderstanding in terms of such distinctions as denotative vs. connotative or literal vs. non-literal only obscures the distinction between this case and others where such notions as denotation and connotation are appropriate for the description of what actually happens. Actually, these notions may help to account for a large number of misunderstandings, as does the pair 'emotive' vs. 'cognitive' mean-

ing, introduced by Stevenson (1946). For example, the 'pseudo-disagreements' described by Stevenson seem to involve disagreement concerning facts (i.e., cognitive meaning), while in fact they are disagreements in attitude (i.e., emotive meaning):

(8) A: John is reliable. He doesn't change his mind every day.
B: No, John is stubborn. It is hard to make him change his mind.

Although some authors (e.g., Osgood) take the 'emotive' component to be at the very heart of 'meaning', it belongs nevertheless to a fairly distinct layer of significance, which I treat, in the onion model, as 'external'. Another example of the way in which 'external' layers (possibly including emotional overtones) play a role in generating misunderstandings is the following personal experience:

(9) /Before leaving Israel to come to Berkeley, I requested from the Jewish National Library in Jerusalem photocopies of some manuscripts, to be sent to my Berkeley address. I got the photocopies with a bill in dollars that was well above what I used to pay in Israeli currency. I wrote them, in Hebrew, asking the Library to bill me in Israeli shekels, at the usual rates. I received the following reply/
"Regarding your letter to our copying department, we would like to call your attention to the fact that we bill our customers abroad in dollar prices. The special prices are available to local clients only. Please send us the amount of ..."

Here, inferences were drawn and action was taken on the basis of mistaken assumptions about the significance of the addressee's address, in spite of clear signals contrary to these assumptions, such as my writing in Hebrew, my use of Tel Aviv University stationary in the original request, etc. What made me particularly upset about the reply was the implication that I am not a 'local', an implication that raised emotions and associations far beyond the 'frame' of a commercial event, explicitly involved in the exchange.

Example (10) (Gumperz 1980a: 320, 330) apparently has to do with Fillmore's fourth question:

(10) /A well-known and highly controversial Black community leader delivers a speech in a public rally to protest against U.S. policies during the Viet Nam war. The speech develops a comparison between U.S. policy against non-white populations abroad and the government's treatment of ethnic

> minorities at home. As the audience — predominantly white — grows impatient and hostile, the speaker's voice rises and his speech takes on increasing intensity (I omit here the very relevant tone, pause, and stress indications given in the transcription of the speech)/
> *Speaker* /having mentioned Richard Nixon before/. This is the man that's responsible ... for all the attacks on the Black Panther Party ... nationally. This is the man that send his vicious ... murderous dogs into the Black community and invade upon our Black Panther Party breakfast programs ... destroy food ... that we have for hungry kids, and expect us to accept shit like that idly. Fuck that motherfuckin man. We will kill Richard Nixon.
> /Audience protests/ We will kill any motherfucker that stands in the way of our freedom.
> /Shortly afterwards the community leader was arrested and indicted for threatening the life of the American President. The defense claimed that the speaker had been using a form of Black dialect hyperbole, which did not constitute a threat to kill, and that the indictment was a result of a misunderstanding/

Assuming that indeed the speaker shifted to the Black dialect of English,[14] and that he did not say, in this dialect, that the life of the President would be taken, but rather that his political power should be destroyed, the question that still remains to be answered is why did he say this in that particular way, i.e., why did he shift to Black English. To be sure, misunderstanding would have been prevented if the shift had been detected by the audience, irrespective of whether an explanation for such a shift were available too. But the lack of such an explanation or a wrong explanation might, in turn, easily generate other misunderstandings. For example, the audience might see the shift to a (partly) unintelligible dialect as an insult. Gumperz indicated some of the possible reasons for the shift in question, having to do with the ritual function of a certain style of Black preaching and its rhythmic alternation of dialects. If such suggestions are correct, then it is clear that the 'Why?' of question IV need not always be answered in terms of the speaker's conscious intentions, but may also refer to regularities that govern his behavior unbeknownst to him.

Finally, I want to present an example of misunderstanding (from Modaressi 1977) that seems to me to derive from a lack of sensitivity to the ways in which gestures, facial expression, and other non-verbal elements are actually combined with verbal elements in the production of 'utterances':

(11) /M is a ten-year-old psychotic girl. What follows is part of an interview between the therapist and M/
T: I am not sure what you mean by *glad*. I am sure I'll understand you in the end. If you could be a little more *clear*.
M /shaking her hands from the wet sand/: I am a *little more clear*?
T: If you could be a *little more clearer*, it would be easier for me to understand you.
M /stroking her mud pie gently/: See, I am *more clear*.
T /a bit surprised/: You think you are *more clear* now?

Aren't hands just cleaned from wet sand 'more clear'? The interview continues with a long stretch where the therapist is unable to identify M's somewhat distorted phonetic rendering of the word *bright*. In fact, M seems to be taking the therapist's request for clarification of the meaning of *glad* as an insult. She *shows* that she is *clear*, and when this showing is clearly insufficient for the therapist (see her last utterance), M proceeds to claim that she is *bright* (as opposed to the therapist's suggestion, as read by her). Maybe even the phonetic distortion of the word has a function here (connected again to question IV), namely to *show* that it is the therapist, who is unable to recognize the word, that is not so bright ... At any rate, this exchange displays a number of misunderstandings, at different levels, and not only on the part of the patient.

3. These examples illustrate a wide range of misunderstandings, occurring in connection with the different layers of significance of an utterance. Although their respective content varies considerably, such examples share a common pattern. Given the conversational demand made by A's utterance, B's response is inappropriate with respect to one or more layers, because B's perception of the conversational demand differs from A's own perception of the conversational demand established by his utterance. Consider now A's position in his next conversational turn. He faces a response that is inappropriate by his standards. He has to interpret such a response and react to it. But in order to do so, A must know whether B's response was based on a misunderstanding of his conversational demand or not. Such information is most directly relevant to A's attempts to find an answer to question III (Was B's utterance intended as a reply to my utterance, as I understand it?). But it is also likely to determine his answers to the other three questions as well, since what is perceived as the 'point' of an utterance may well be processed first, and determine the way in which the propositional content, the frame, and the

rhetorical devices used will be perceived.[15] So, the ability to decide whether or not on the part of B there was misunderstanding, seems to be a pre-condition to answer any of the interpretive questions A must answer, which in turn is a pre-condition for his ability to provide an appropriate response to the conversational demand established by B's utterance at this point of the conversation. The availability of means to 'check for misunderstanding' appears thus to be a *sine qua non* for the well-functioning of conversation, at all its levels.

As already pointed out, nowhere is the need for such an ability more evident than in the case of generating and understanding implicatures. The interpretation of an implicature requires a step of detection of an (apparent) violation of a maxim. This takes the form of an assessment of some kind of misfit (irrelevance, in the case of the maxim of relevance), between the conversational demand at that point of the conversation and 'what is said' in an utterance purportedly responding to that demand. I have called this level of comparison 'semantic' (Chapter 2), as opposed to the 'pragmatic' level, which takes into account the significance of the utterance as a whole (what is said plus what is implicated). However, the detected violation should only trigger an implicature-generating process if it is perceived as an *intentional violation* of the maxim. Applying Shimanoff's (1980: 132-134) useful distinctions between four types of behavior "negatively" associated with a rule, the problem is to determine whether the speaker's behavior is indeed "rule-violation behavior", or else "rule-ignorant behavior", "rule-error behavior", or "negative rule-reflective behavior".

According to Shimanoff's definitions, 'rule-ignorant' behavior occurs when a person's failure to fulfill a rule is due to his/her ignorance of the rule. This would generate misunderstandings between speakers who do not share one or more rules. 'Rule-error' behavior involves not an ignorance of the rule, but only a current unawareness of it. 'Rule-violation' behavior requires that the actor not only knows the rule, but also that he/she consciously makes sure that his/her behavior does not comply with it. Its distinctive mark is, therefore, 'consciousness' and 'present awareness' of the rule. Finally, 'negative rule-reflective' behavior requires all of the above, plus a negative evaluation of the rule. The rule is, therefore, not so much 'violated' as it is (consciously) rejected.[16] Clearly, misunderstandings can arise from the hearer's wrong identification of the speaker's way of failing to obey a rule. If such a failure is just 'rule-error' or 'rule-ignorant' behavior, it cannot be used to trigger an implicature-generating search. Similarly, if there are other *causal* explanations, not

necessarily rule-related, for the apparent inappropriateness of the response (e.g., lack of attention to a stimulus, as in the Menon case discussed in Chapter 2), no implicature should be generated.

As a result of these considerations, I propose to add two 'rules', (C) and (M),[17] to the system of heuristic devices that guide the hearer in his task of unraveling the implicatures possibly conveyed by an utterance. These rules are:

(C) Check for causal explanation.
(M) Check for misunderstanding.

Clearly, the proper place to 'locate' these rules in the heuristic system in question is immediately *after* the detection of an alleged violation of a maxim (more generally, of a misfit), and *before* any attempt to provide hypotheses as to the possible implicatures conveyed.[18] In a sense, this follows from Occam's Razor: causal explanations or explanations invoking misunderstanding are *simpler* and less onerous than explanations (of an apparent misfit) in terms of implicatures. If the former are plausible, therefore, they should take precedence over the latter, in any given context.

Consider now how such a rule as (M) could possibly be followed. Obviously, A has no access to B's mind in order to check the latter's construal of the conversational demand. A must rely on some observable clues, or on other procedures in order to be reasonably sure that misunderstanding did not occur, and then proceed to his interpretative task. One conceivable thing he can do, since he is the person who sets up the conversational demand in the first place, is to take special care to *prevent* misunderstanding, when establishing such a demand. Evidently, all he can (and should be required to) do in this connection is to scan *possible misunderstandings* as to the form of the words he chooses to utter, and, so to speak, pre-repair the form of those words, so as to avoid all possible misunderstandings he has found to have any likelihood to occur in the context.[19] But such a procedure cannot be expected to be foolproof. Some misunderstandings will inevitably occur, in spite of the speaker's precautions. Therefore, in order to be able to follow (M), he must have means to constantly *monitor* misunderstandings, as well as means to *correct* them, if this is deemed necessary by him. The responsibility of a speaker for what he says in a conversation is not limited to his uttering it. For his own sake, insofar as he wants to produce reliable interpretations of his interlocutor's utterances, he must follow up the effects of his utterances closely, to monitor for misunderstandings and to correct them.

Given the importance of these procedures for communication, one should expect that some sort of 'misunderstanding management system', comprising mechanisms for *preventing*, for *monitoring*, and for *correcting* misunderstanding (possibly three different sub-systems or routines) be available to anyone engaging in conversation. Such mechanisms may be linguistic, but also para-linguistic and non-verbal. Furthermore, they may either have as their primary function the management of misunderstanding, or else be only occasionally used for these purposes. Further speculation about the nature of such mechanisms must await empirical research. At this stage, all I can do is offer some suggestions of different devices that seem to belong to each one of the three sub-systems mentioned.

Consider the first sentence of this paper. It may have sounded somewhat strange, perhaps even ungrammatical, because of the phrase *among linguists and among philosophers* it contains. This construction was chosen in order to make it clear that I *do not* have a situation in mind where philosophers and linguists are in opposite camps, debating the issue in question *against* each other. This, I thought, is what would have been conveyed if I had used, instead, the simpler form *among linguists and philosophers*. My insertion of the apparently redundant and presumably ungrammatical second occurrence of *among* was therefore intended to *prevent* misunderstanding. Of course, all this effort was prompted by my precarious mastery of the lexical choices English provides for cases such as this. Had I been aware of the availability of the two lexical options, namely *between* and *among*, which differ precisely in that the former expresses a two-place predicate, whereas the latter expresses a one-place predicate, I would not have presumed that *among linguists and philosophers* might have, as one of its readings, the meaning of 'between linguists and philosophers'.

Still, the example is illustrative. For one thing, in languages such as Portuguese or Spanish, in which a single lexical item, namely *entre*, performs the functions of both *between* and *among* (in the context considered), my precaution would be justified, since the misunderstanding I wanted to prevent might indeed arise. For another, the example suggests the complexity of what is involved in preventing misunderstanding. The kind of misunderstanding I tried to prevent has to do, primarily, with the specification of the nature of the predicate used (one- or two-place) and with its scope. Yet, as in most of our examples, it involves much more than this 'mere' semantico-syntactical fact. Notice, for example, that the possibility of the misunderstanding in question

only arises because of the presence of the noun *discussion* at the beginning of the sentence. If instead of discuss*ion*, I had used *writing,* for example, no problem of the kind considered here would arise. *Discussion* is associated with a prototypical 'scene' which comprises at least two parties engaged in verbal exchanges, involving some sort of disagreement, and having to do with a more or less specific topic. The 'blanks' contained in this schematic mental scene may or may not be filled by available contextual information or by further textual elaboration. They refer to the nature of the verbal exchanges (which in fact should be conceived as embedded scenes, with an internal structure of their own), to the kind of disagreement, to the topic(s) discussed, and to the parties involved.[20] As far as the latter are concerned, they may be specified in a number of ways. The two-discussant parties may be mentioned, and they may be either single individuals, or groups, or an individual and a group. In this case, English seems to require the lexical choice (if this is the way the specification is to be made) of *between*. In case a group is one of the discussants specified, no provision needs to be made, however, as to whether all, most, or only a few members of the group actually produce any of the utterances that make up the discussion. This is one of the respects in which the specification in question involves fuzziness.

The modifier *a lot* adds another measure of fuzziness to our scene. If more than two parties are mentioned, then the lexical choice should be *among,* but again the parties may be specified individually, collectively as a group, or as a number of groups, etc., and nothing is said about the actual pairs or triples of discussants that generate 'a lot of discussion'. Potentially, any of these 'missing' specifications might be the source of some misunderstanding, in a sufficiently specialized context. But to prevent misunderstanding does not require taking into account this myriad of 'potential' (but hardly actualized) misunderstandings. It does require, however, taking into account 'likely' misunderstandings; their likelihood derives either from certain ambiguities inherent in the linguistic form used, or from specific characteristics of *this* particular context of use.

It would be foolish to suppose that the *only* function of such words as my (unusual) second use of *among* (or, in Portuguese, a correct iteration of *entre*) is 'to prevent misunderstanding'. As we have seen, they have the effect of specifying the nature of the predicate involved — a respectable semantic function. But unless one has in mind the prevention of misunderstanding, one cannot properly answer, in the cases considered, question III with regard to

these words. To be sure, *any* word can be used in a misunderstanding prevention role. But some words or constructions seem to somehow specialize in this. I suspect that words that so specialize are the so-called scope indicators *(both*, *either*; which, in some languages, occur in pairs), certain kinds of hedges, and a 'cancelation' word such as *but* (in one of its senses, namely that of Hebr. *aval*, Ger. *aber*, and Sp. *sino*; cf. Chapter 6).

As for the misunderstanding correction devices, again, non-specialized elements can be used. This is the case of the stress on *here*, in the last sentence of example (1). But here too, I suspect that some words or linguistic constructions may well specialize in the job. One case in point seems to be the corrective sense of *but* (corresponding to Hebr. *ela*, Ger. *sondern*, and Sp. *pero*), which requires an explicit negation in the sentence that precedes it.

Since monitoring for misunderstanding must occur for the most part simultaneously with the production and reception of speech, it is likely that the mechanisms specialized in this function are mainly non-verbal, or at most, para-linguistic. Gumperz (1980b) has pointed out a number of such para-linguistic 'contextualization cues' that indicate understanding, and has shown how their ignorance by foreign speakers may cause misunderstandings. Such cues are, in fact, indicators of understanding, rather than of misunderstanding. Certain gestures, however, seem to specialize either way. Nods indicate the former, while frowns seem to indicate the latter. At any rate, it is clear that the two systems are intimately related in that the *absence* of understanding-indicating signals may serve to signal misunderstanding or difficulty of understanding. Much more, however, must be done in order to describe this particular sub-system correctly (in particular, it must be established that there is, in this connection, a clear distinction between misunderstanding indicators and lack-of-understanding indicators).

Notes

1. On the importance of dictionaries as repositories of common-sense or "folk" theories (and ideologies), see Sarfaty (1995).

2. In so far as monitoring misunderstanding is an essential part of coordinating communicative interaction, which must be performed "on line", it requires the use of channels of communication other than the verbal one (see Chapter 14b). Unfortunately, although the importance of the nonverbal in communication is generally acknowledged, it is still difficult to find attempts to systematically integrate the non-verbal and the verbal in

studies of communication in general (a significant exception is McNeill 1992) and of misunderstanding in particular. I foresee a change in this situation with the possible replacements of traditional forms of exposition (which are predominately written) by multi-media presentations.

3. Aitchison (1994:200) reports an experiment where Freudian slips in a reading task were induced when "a provocatively dressed female asked male subjects to read out pairs of words" such as *past fashion* or *sappy hex*, which significantly many subjects misread as "fast passion" and "happy sex", respectively.

4. We have been considering here as relevant only the usually accepted "linguistic" levels of understanding. But there are other kinds of interpretive activity — e.g., psychoanalysis — with different criteria of "correct understanding" (cf. Chapter 30). Misunderstanding can occur according to these criteria, without implying the occurrence of misunderstanding at the levels here considered.

5. This is also what motivates communicators to check for possible misunderstandings or causal explanations of an ostensively inappropriate contribution to a conversation, before taking them to convey implicatures (cf. Chapter 14b).

6. For an analysis of controversies and other forms of polemics, see Chapter 13 and Dascal (1998a).

7. Wittgenstein — the reader will recall — would say that when such a shift occurs pseudo-problems arise because language is no longer performing its usual work, but rather is "turning idle".

8. The same is the case, of course, of the *rhetorical* "picture" Taylor proposes: "What I offer is not *the* way that intellectual metadiscourse should be (or must be) seen, but simply *another way*: a different way of fitting the pieces together" (23). Notice Taylor's care here regarding a possible *tu quoque* counter-argument to the alternative he suggests once his critique overcomes the options he criticizes (see Chapter 11).

9. See, however, Zaefferer (1977) and the bibliography therein. It should be pointed out that I am not going to deal here with what Bierwisch (1970) calls 'linguistic *errors*'.

10. The 'onion' picture of the significance of an utterance has been discussed, and some of its implications have been explored in Chapters 6 and 10.

11. There is no reason to assume that all of the layers play the same role in commanding the response. The aspect referred to as 'the point' of the utterance may normally have a dominant role. But 'the point' can only be determined by the hearer, by taking into account pragmatic as well as semantic factors. Furthermore, in many cases, it is a marginal aspect of the utterance that may command the response. This may be either a 'comment' (such as the ones expressed by adverbs like *frankly*, *honestly*, etc.), or some clear implication of the event reported in the utterance (like the tangential remark in example (6)), or some other thing. A more careful empirical investigation should clarify to what extent the different layers contribute to establishing the conversational demand that commands the response.

12. The example is due to Hilary Putnam. Incidentally, this example, too, is most often construed as a joke, and not as a case of real misunderstanding.

13. Ruesch (1972: 49 and *passim*) stresses the importance of correct or appropriate timing of a response, not only in preventing misunderstandings, but also in avoiding more permanent damage to the communicative competence — particularly in the case of children: "Improper timing of signals, statements, and messages has its most devastating effects in early childhood".

14. Gumperz presents a number of reasons justifying this claim, which include observations about the other forms the speaker uses at this point of the speech, some of which are typical of Black English, as well as observations about the rhythm, intonation, and other characteristic patterns that occur at that point of the speech. A further survey reported by him shows that Black speakers in the area normally use kill 'metaphorically' (*He killed that bottle* for *He finished that bottle*), rather than literally; to express the idea of taking someone's life, other expressions are normally used (e.g., *to wipe him out*, *to rip him off*).

15. Gumperz (1980a: 320) seems to suggest a similar hierarchical order: "...conversational inference relies on multiple levels of signaling. We first process talk to derive the general perspective or interpretive frame in terms of which we judge what is going on and then in turn use this interpretive frame to decide on what is intended at any one point in the event and on how to respond". This is connected to the issue raised in note 4 above. It seems to me that the interaction between the various layers or 'signaling systems' is rather complex, and that, so far, we have no clear evidence that one or another of these signals is usually 'processed first'.

16. Although Shimanoff points out *some* behavior indicators that she believes to be correlated with these four types of behavior, mainly having to do with the acceptance of sanctions, such correlations seem to me rather weak and ill-supported. Furthermore, all of them have to do with what happens *after*, say, the speech act. They allow, therefore, the detection of a misunderstanding only *post-factum*. In this sense, they overlook the need for preventive and 'on-line' monitoring devices, which I discuss below.

17. I use inverted commas here because the rules proposed are clearly 'rules of interpretation' and not 'rules that prescribe behavior' — the only ones that Shimanoff (1980: 51ff.), for one, proposes to call 'rules', properly speaking. I think her banning of 'interpretation rules' is an arguable point, especially in its generalized version that bans all 'rules' that 'prescribe cognitions'. True enough, 'cognitions' cannot be prescribed. But some rules may have to do with an attempt to 'direct' our cognitive mechanisms to some particular contents rather than to others. It is perfectly plausible, for example, to conceive of a rule that says 'Direct your attention to the most salient stimulus in the context, and react to it' (cf. my analysis of the Menon case). This refers directly (not only indirectly, as all other rules of behavior do) to a cognitive state. Now, would one say that this is a 'behavior' rule, insofar as it 'prescribes' *mental behavior*? In that case, I have no quarrel with the proposal, but of course, it completely empties the term 'behavior' of any distinctive meaning. Another way of replying to criticisms of this kind to my proposed rules of interpretation is to say that a rule such as (M) (cf. infra) may be in fact derived from a 'proper' behavior

rule, namely, something akin to Grice's fourth maxim (of 'manner'): 'Be perspicuous' (i.e., in the proposed reading, 'prevent misunderstanding').

18. Notice that this differs entirely from the 'ordering' proposed in Gazdar's (1979) system, where first all the implicatures (i.e., potential implicatures) of a sentence are generated and then the context is used in order to cancel out those that do not fit, leaving only the actual (non-hyphenated) implicatures. It seems to me that such a system would overload the processing capacity of any real speaker. It is, at best, a purely *formal* description of the nature of implicature, but not a theoretical model of the way in *which* implicatures can be used in conversation.

19. This requirement is similar to one of the rules of the Scholastic *disputatio*, according to which the defendant of a given thesis has to reply only to the *actual* objections raised against the thesis. He is under no obligation to defend it against all *possible* objections. The 'defensibility' of a thesis depends on the former ability, not on the latter. Leibniz used this distinction in an interesting way in order to reply to the skeptics that denied the possibility of distinguishing between what is 'beyond reason' (e.g., the mysteries of faith), and what is 'contrary to reason'. Cf. Dascal (1975a) for details.

20. The 'discussion' scene or frame belongs to a 'family' of such scenes, namely the family of 'communicative' events. In the kind of 'cognitive model' theories of language currently being developed in Berkeley, where a distinction is made between an 'understanding' mode and an 'action in progress' mode, both connected to the same utterance, it would be interesting to try to find out to which of these modes does the 'misunderstanding management system' belong. Clearly, since it relates to the current flow of speech and to the proper chaining of discourse segments, it has to do with the action in progress mode. On the other hand, by the very nature of misunderstanding (misunderstanding), it must be related also to the 'understanding' mode. I am sure that George Lakoff, who has been using this distinction, would not object to the discovery of devices that belong to the two modes. Quite to the contrary, such devices would lend further support to his general position that 'semantics = pragmatics', i.e., that there is an intimate correlation between the two modes.

Chapter 15

Understanding the law

A. Transparency and doubt: Understanding and interpretation in pragmatics and in Law

1. Overview

In legal practice and often also in legal theory, issues of interpretation of a law, a precedent, and even an indictment and a sentence, loom large. Sometimes such issues hinge on technical legal terms, but more often they have to do with the way certain expressions of everyday language are or should be understood in a certain context of use. Pragmatics is that part of the theory of language that undertakes — among other things[1] — to account for the principles of language use that allow for users of a language to understand each other, i.e., to interpret appropriately, in the context of use, utterances or texts. In this interdisciplinary paper, we attempt to show how a pragmatically oriented conception of interpretation in law, which makes use of some of the insights of pragmatics, can offer a fruitful solution to some traditional puzzles.

At least three principal meanings of the term 'interpretation' may be distinguished (Wróblewski 1983a: 72f.; 1985a: 21f.):

(a) 'Interpretation' *sensu largissimo* [SL-interpretation] means any understanding of any object as an object of culture, through the ascription to its material substratum of a meaning, a sense, or a value. This concept is, philosophically, one of the bases for claiming that the *Kultur-* or *Geisteswissenschaften*, which deal with such 'meaningful' objects, ought to be methodologically distinguished from the natural sciences (cf. Rickert 1911). Textual and philosophical hermeneutics usually draw attention to this kind of understanding or interpretation (cf. Gadamer 1976; see Chapter 29).

(b) 'Interpretation' *sensu largo* [L-interpretation] means an ascription of meaning to a sign treated as belonging to a certain language and as being used in accordance to the rules of that language and to accepted communicative practices. To understand a linguistic sign means, thus, to L-interpret it. Semantics and, as will be argued below, pragmatics too are concerned with interpretation in this sense.

(c) 'Interpretation' *sensu stricto* [S-interpretation] means an ascription of meaning to a linguistic sign in the case its meaning is doubtful in a communicative situation, i.e., in the case its 'direct understanding' is not sufficient for the communicative purpose at hand. Unlike L-interpretation, S-interpretation refers, thus, only to 'problematic' understanding, due to such phenomena as obscurity, ambiguity, metaphor, implicitness, indirectness, change of meaning, etc. Legal practice often faces such problems, and consequently there is a tendency to view this sense of 'interpretation' as the only relevant one for law. Pragmatics, in its narrow sense, has also tended to focus exclusively on 'problematic' understanding, i.e., on those cases where semantics alone is insufficient to determine the meaning of a linguistic sign, and contextual information must be taken into account.

It is evident that the use of the term 'interpretation', in any of the above senses, and particularly in the last one, implies certain assumptions about the notion of 'clarity' of meaning. This is the reason why we will approach the issue by attempting to clarify such assumptions. We will first (section 2) analyze the presuppositions underlying the classical conception of legal interpretation, traditionally expressed in terms of the maxims *clara non sunt interpretanda* and *interpretatio cessat in claris*, and explore their connections with classical epistemology and philosophy of language. Such a model will then be criticized (section 3). After a brief description of the relevant principles of pragmatics (section 4), we will present a pragmatically oriented view of legal interpretation providing a defensible reading of the traditional maxims (section 5).

2. *Claritas* in the legal doctrine of interpretation and in the philosophical tradition

The traditional use of the term 'interpretation' in legal discourse is restricted to S-interpretation. This is not only the case in traditional theory of interpretation, but also in the deep-rooted paradigm of legal dogmatics constructed by the German historical school and legal positivism (cf. Aarnio 1983: Chapter 8; Aarnio 1984; Zuleta Puceiro 1981: Chapters 1-3).

The object of S-interpretation is the legal text of an enacted legal act. The standard example is a statute enacted by parliament. The meaning of this text is either clear or not. If it is clear then there is no need to interpret it, because it is understood in a direct way. This direct understanding is not explained, but just claimed to obtain. If the text, however, is not clear, then one should

determine the meaning by elimination of doubt. It is assumed that the text has a definite meaning, and the task of interpretation is to discover it.

The meaning of a legal text is usually described as the will or will-content [*voluntas legis*] of the historical lawmaker.[2] Therefore, the search for the meaning in question ought to use all means relevant for reconstructing that will. According to this view, however, the lawmaker is not only the alleged historical agent, but also a normative construct, for he is endowed with the properties of a 'rational agent'. This means that the interpretation must follow a 'principle of charity' (cf. Dascal 1983: 121ff.), i.e., it must ascribe to the text that meaning that maximizes its 'rationality'. For example, an interpretation that could be shown to be in conflict with other, well established, aims and values of the lawmaker, should be rejected on the grounds that, if accepted, it would amount to attributing to the lawmaker an inconsistency, i.e., a form of irrationality.

The distinction between the situation of direct understanding, when the text is assumed to be clear, and that of doubtful texts which require S-interpretation is based upon the properties of the legal text itself. That is to say, it is taken to be an objective fact, which has to be cognized by the lawyer. In other words, there is an objective quality of the text, namely 'clarity', whose cognition is the pre-condition for deciding whether it is necessary to engage in S-interpretation or not.[3] The two historical maxims *clara non sunt interpretanda*[4] and *interpretatio cessat in claris*[5] are the hallmark of this traditional doctrine.

Philosophically, this doctrine is related to the Cartesian epistemological principle of clear and distinct ideas. For Descartes, these ideas are such that they function as an absolute Archimedean point for all knowledge because, once intuited, their truth is immediately given, and they are in no need for further explication. Empiricists (e.g., Locke), though denying the innateness Descartes attributes at least to some of these ideas, also assumed the existence of unquestionably clear and certain ideas, namely, those that originate directly in sense impressions. On both rationalist and empiricist views, the meaning of properly used linguistic expressions can be traced back to such clear ideas, and those linguistic expressions that refer directly to them are immediately understood and require neither definition nor 'interpretation'. This assumption is clearly expressed by the influential Port Royal Logic:

> ...lorsque l'idée que les hommes ont de quelque chose est distincte, et que tous ceux qui entendent une langue forment la même idée en entendant prononcer un mot, il seroit inutile de le definir, puisqu'on a déja la fin de la définition, qui est que le mot soit attaché à une idée claire et distincte. C'est ce qui arrive dans les choses fort simples dont tous les hommes ont naturellement la même idée, de sorte que les mots par lesquels on les signifie sont entendus de la même sorte par tous ceux qui s'en servent ... Tels sont les mots d'être, de *pensée*, d'*étendue*, d'*égalité*, de *durée*, ou de *temps*, et autres semblables (Arnauld and Nicole 1683: 125).[6]

On this view, confusion may arise by virtue of the 'accessory' ideas men tend to add to the 'principal signification' of a word. These include emotive connotations (e.g., the word *mentir* excites in the mind the ideas of disdain and insult), situated specifications of a deictic (e.g., *hoc* exciting in the mind, in one context, the idea of bread and in another that of the body of Christ), figurative speech (e.g., metaphor), etc. Since such accessory ideas may vary individually, historically, and situationally, and since one is not always aware of the impact they have upon the mind, their presence is likely to produce unwarranted misunderstanding, disagreement and dispute.[7] Only then interpretation, i.e., S-interpretation, is required.

Arnauld and Nicole have considerably refined this general semantic-pragmatic framework on the occasion of its application to a famous theological-juridical dispute.[8] Since 1665 ecclesiastical authorities begun to demand that all members of the clergy sign a document condemning Jansenius's doctrine, as part of an attempt to curb Port Royal's independent stance. Arnauld and Nicole observed that the proposition "The doctrine (the meaning) of Jansenius is heretical" involves two propositions, one "de fait" and the other "de droit". The latter establishes that a certain doctrine is heretical, which the former attributes to Jansenius. Signing the document means declaring one's belief in the truth of both, unless an explicit restriction is appended to it indicating that the signer accepts the "de droit" proposition (which depends upon faith alone) on the Church's authority, but withholds judgment on the "de fait" proposition, on which the Church cannot command assent, because it is not a matter of faith but of objective fact. Arnauld and Nicole's proposal to append such an explicit restriction, at first accepted by the authorities, was later on rejected.

Throughout the several-decades-long debate, two major problems of interpretation were at stake: (a) what is the "meaning" of the signature itself; and

(b) can one discern in Jansenius's writings the (heretical) doctrine attributed to him. Both Arnauld and Nicole and their opponents assume that both questions have definite answers, i.e., that there is a clear meaning that can be objectively attributed to both texts. The need for interpretation arises due to the disagreement as to what is that meaning, but the problem can be solved by applying the 'correct' interpretative procedure. The fact that no such agreement was reached, however, suggests that contextual factors such as the ideological and political positions of the contenders influence interpretation no less than purely textual factors, and may prevent an "objective" outcome of the process of interpretation.

Leibniz, who was in general a critic of Cartesianism, adopted on this matter a similar position, though on different grounds. He defined the clarity of a sentence as follows: "*Clara* est oratio cuius omnium vocabulorum significationes notae sunt, tantum attendenti" (Leibniz A:6, 2, 408-409).[9] Interpretation, on the other hand, is defined as making clear that which is not sufficiently clear in a sentence: "*Interpretari* est docere circa orationem seu circa orationem non satis cognitum facere cognitum".[10] Leibniz rejected Cartesian intuitionism, and sought to develop formal means — such as his well-known attempts to create a Universal Characteristic — to ensure clarity and precision. He believed that, once formulated in the unambiguous characters of the Universal Characteristic, the truth of any statement would become a matter of calculation, leaving no room for further dispute.[11] Certainty, defined by him as the clarity of truth ("certitudo est claritas veritatis" — Leibniz A:6, 2, 493), would thus be achieved. In this sense, the Characteristic would function as the ultimate "judge of controversies". It should be complemented by an objective method of interpretation: an impartial judge, taking no sides in a dispute, would objectively report the arguments of each party, appropriately 'developing' their "expressions embarassées et ambiguës" (confused and ambiguous expressions) and keeping "un certain ordre qui portera avec lui la clarté et l'évidence" (a certain order that would carry with it clarity and evidence); such a report would then serve as the basis for a decision that would be in fact obvious for any "homme de bon sens" (Leibniz A:4, 3, 204-212). According to Leibniz, the application of these methods to judicial decisions would have to be done in such a way as not to delay such decisions indefinitely, for *brevitas* is no lesser a requirement of justice than *certitudo* (Leibniz A:1, 1, 104). He believed, however, that, with the help of a reform that would systematize the body of the Law, interpretation and decision — using the

methods he outlined — could achieve certainty without sacrificing brevity (cf. Dascal 1978: 155ff.).

3. Criticism of the traditional doctrine

This traditional doctrine of clarity and S-interpretation is criticized in many contemporary theories of legal interpretation.

The naïve construction of the meaning of a legal text as the will of the historical and/or rational lawmaker is rejected as obviously inadequate. Indeed, no sophisticated criticism is needed to demonstrate that the meaning in this sense is neither observable or recoverable by empirical linguistic procedures nor defensible as a convincing theoretical construct. The positivistic debate on the so-called 'subjective' and 'objective' theories of interpretation reveals the ambiguities inherent in this doctrine.[12] The blind alley of trying to determine the will of a "hundred-headed parliament" as a psychological past fact is patent. We would like to focus, rather, on more recent and specific forms of criticism.

First, some authors state flatly that every legal text is interpreted (e.g., van der Kerchove 1976, 1986; Tarello 1980: Chapter 1.5). This cannot be an empirical generalization, since at least in some legal practice it is evident that the text is not interpreted but rather assumed to be clear. One might construe that statement, then, as a linguistic convention: by employing the notion of L-interpretation, the thesis that each legal text, just as any other piece of discourse, is L-interpreted becomes an analytical statement. But in fact, such a statement is based on a persuasive argument, which stresses the context-dependency of the meaning of any text, so that its alleged clarity is not a property of the text itself, but rather of the pair [text, context of interpretation (or application)].

Second, it is possible to demonstrate that the acknowledgment of the clarity of a text or of a doubt calling for S-interpretation is not itself based on the description of the text, but depends on evaluations by the decision-maker. That is to say, one can empirically show that, say, a court determining what is clear and what demands interpretation is not in fact relying upon inherent features of the legal text alone. There are many sources of doubt (see section 4), and in practice the decision that the text is not clear is based on an evaluation of the acceptance of the results of its use in its alleged 'direct

meaning' (cf. van der Kerchove 1976). The specific feature of the context-dependency of the reading of a text here stressed is the role played by the interpreter's background assumptions, values, aims, etc. — a factor strongly stressed by philosophical hermeneutics (cf. Gadamer 1976).

A recent ruling of the U.S. Supreme Court may serve to illustrate the former two points. The court had formerly interpreted the Immigration and Nationality Act as requiring that aliens seeking asylum in the U.S. show a "clear probability" that they will be persecuted in their home country. Since the Immigration and Naturalization Service, in turn, persisted in interpreting this requirement rather stringently, the court now decided that refugees need only prove a "well-founded fear" of persecution. One of the judges accused the INS of "seemingly purposeful blindness" in its refusal to see that Congress had intended a less stringent standard of proof. Yet, another judge pointed out that it was reasonable for the INS to find no practical distinction between 'clear probability' and 'well-founded fear' (cf. TIME Magazine, March 23, 1987: 28). Clearly, the attempt to clarify the meaning of the Act was unlikely to determine in a univocal way its application by a government agency, presumably motivated by concerns other than those guiding the Supreme Court.

Third, there is an argument to the effect that the traditional doctrine of clarity assumes legal language and law to have certain properties they do not in fact possess. These assumptions include (van der Kerchove 1986: 223ff.): (a) there are legal texts whose meaning is by itself clear or evident; (b) legal terms not defined by the lawmaker have in principle the same direct meaning — clear or ambiguous — they have in everyday language; (c) the lack of clarity is a result either of the ambiguity or of the indeterminacy of the usual meaning of a term or syntactical construction; (d) clarity of the rule is the general principle or at least the ideal to which all lawmaking should strive; (e) the acknowledgment of the clarity or obscurity of a text does not require, in itself, any interpretation.

The question is whether these assumptions are necessary to make sense of any use of the notion of clarity in legal interpretation. Our contention is that, though these assumptions are defining of the traditional doctrine of clarity — and hence the arguments above undermine such a doctrine — they are not valid in general for *all* uses of this notion, especially not for the pragmatically-oriented doctrine we outline below. If clarity is treated as a pragmatic feature of a legal text used in a concrete situation rather than as an absolute property of the text itself, it follows that: assumptions (a) and (c) are not necessary;

assumption (d) becomes irrelevant in the context of interpretation, since it has to do with the theory of lawmaking and cannot be assumed to be fulfilled in existing legal texts (cf. Wróblewski 1985b); assumption (b) cannot be taken at face value, because linguistic indefiniteness *must* be resolved in the context of application of a law (recall the Leibnizian requirement of *brevitas*), i.e., normative (or ideological) "directives for legal interpretation" must be able to supplement common linguistic practices of interpretation (Wróblewski 1972; 1983a: 18ff., 46ff.; 1985a: Chapter 6); finally, assumption (e), which is implied by the adoption of the notion of S-interpretation, is itself relativized to context, acquiring thus a pragmatic meaning.

4. Pragmatic interpretation

The traditional doctrine of clarity and interpretation criticized above is in fact one example of a once widespread 'naïve' conception of discourse understanding which either overlooks entirely pragmatics (being exclusively semantic) or else conceives of the role of pragmatics in a very narrow way. We have already seen some of the classical formulations of this conception. Its contemporary versions include, among other variations, the logical positivists' notion of an entirely explicit, unambiguous, and precise 'language of science' in which all meaningful statements about the world could in principle be formulated and univocally understood, and Popper's belief that texts have objective contents which belong to a Platonic "third world" where psychological problems of interpretation do not arise. The common core of this view is the assumption that the context-dependency of sentences is an accidental feature of only some sentences — namely, those that Quine calls 'occasional sentences'. In principle, it is believed, such sentences can be transformed into 'eternal sentences' (i.e., sentences which have one and only one "meaning" and, consequently, a fixed truth value) by replacing their 'indexical' or 'deictic' expressions (e.g., *here*, *today*, *I*, etc.) by explicit definite descriptions or names, thus removing any indefiniteness or incompleteness of meaning.

At first, pragmatics was narrowly conceived as that part of the theory of meaning that would complement semantics in the sense of taking into account the relevant contextual information that would allow to perform the above described 'completion' or 'specification' of incomplete sentence-meanings. Let us call the meaning thus 'completed' the 'utterance-meaning'. It was

soon realized, however, that (a) not only deictics are responsible for the 'incompleteness' of sentence-meaning and (b) even the completed utterance-meanings may not correspond to what is actually conveyed by an utterance in a given communicative situation. Examples of (a) are the implicit comparatives such as *tall* in *John is tall*, whose interpretation implies a reference to a standard or average that has to be gathered from the context. Examples of (b) are the so-called conversational implicatures (e.g., *I have a lot of work to do today* meaning, in a given context, "The interview is over").[13]

Given the existence of cases such as (b), it became evident that, for any given utterance-meaning it is necessary to determine whether it corresponds or not to the 'speaker's-meaning'. Such a determination depends upon context. But context here intervenes in a way that is quite different from its role in 'completing' sentence-meaning to yield an utterance-meaning. For, whereas its completing function is prompted by a 'gap' (or free variable) in the sentence-meaning, which indicates the kind of contextual information to be sought, there is no incompleteness or gap in the utterance-meaning that triggers a search for a speaker's-meaning possibly different from it. It is rather an eventual 'mismatch' between the 'computed' utterance-meaning and some contextual factor that triggers such a search (in the example above, this may be the unexpectedness or irrelevance *vis-à-vis* the current conversation of the remark about having a lot of work to do). Pragmatics turned its attention to the mechanisms of 'indirectness', i.e., the ways in which speaker's-meanings differing from the ostensive utterance-meanings could nevertheless be reliably conveyed and understood. Grice's well-known system of conversational maxims (see Chapter 2; Dascal 1983: *passim*) is one such mechanism, eventually generalizable to written controversies (see Chapters 8, 12, and especially 13).

Yet, pragmatic interpretation cannot be restricted to working out indirect meaning. For, unless at least a summary contextual check of appropriateness is made, one can never know whether the utterance-meaning corresponds to the speaker's-meaning. Making such a check amounts to asking whether there are reasons *not* to accept the utterance-meaning at face value. If the answer is "No", one can say that the utterance is 'transparent'. If it is "Yes", a heuristics for generating and checking alternative interpretations is put to work until a "No" answer is reached for a given interpretative hypothesis, which is then taken to be the speaker's-meaning of the utterance in that context. Though fallible in principle, since it is not algorithmic but heuristic, not deductive (nor

inductive) but abductive, this process of interpretation is in general fairly reliable and convergent.

Pragmatic interpretation is, thus, always required, even in the case of transparency. It corresponds, in a sense, to the notion of L-interpretation introduced above. In this framework, the notions of clarity and S-interpretation can be reconstructed as follows: clarity means 'transparency', i.e., endorsement of the 'computed' utterance-meaning or, if you wish, straightforward L-interpretation, while S-interpretation refers to a lack of transparency (a "yes" answer to the checking question) that leads to a search for an 'indirect' meaning of the utterance or text.

The notion of "speaker's meaning", which is central for the pragmatics of conversation, may cause some difficulty when applied to certain kinds of written texts. It can be argued that the purpose of interpreting, say, a literary or legal text, is not primarily to determine what the producer of the text intended to convey. Thus, one may point out that what the authors of the U.S. constitution meant by 'equal protection' is at most of historical interest, while what matters is how the present courts interpret these terms. The fact remains, however, that the courts seek an 'objective' reading of the legal text, which is not necessarily identical to its literal meaning, nor can it be obtained by the mere "filling in of gaps" characteristic of the determination of utterance meaning. It is this unique (in a given context) 'objective' meaning of the text that corresponds to the role played in the pragmatics of conversation by the notion of "speaker's meaning". Accordingly, in the pragmatic account of the interpretation of certain kinds of text, the "authors' meaning" need not have a central position, and can be viewed merely as one of the contextual factors in the interpretation process. The changes required by this modification, however, can be accommodated — as indicated above — in the general pragmatic framework here sketched (see also Chapter 8a).

5. *Interpretatio cessat in claris*: A pragmatically oriented theory of legal interpretation

In legal practice, when the legal text to be applied is not clear enough, one engages in S-interpretation. Two relevant facts are beyond dispute: (a) not all applied legal texts are S-interpreted; and (b) sometimes the alleged clarity of the text is used as an argument for its direct understanding and against the

need of S-interpretation. These two *bona fide* facts justify the use of the concepts of S-interpretation and clarity in the description and explanation of legal practice.

There are, thus, two types of situations (Makkonen 1965: #5; Gottlieb 1968: Chapter 7; Wróblewski 1983a: 33-38). First, the 'situation of isomorphy': the text fits the case under consideration directly and unproblematically, as a glove to a hand. This corresponds, in pragmatic terms, to its being (L-) interpreted 'transparently', i.e., with no need to look for a meaning other than its semantically computed utterance meaning. Second, the 'situation of (S-) interpretation': there are relevant and reasonable doubts about the applicability of the text to the case at hand, expressed by the claim that *lex non clara est* (the law is not clear). Pragmatically, this means that the transparent reading of the text is contextually inadequate, and a search for an indirect or alternative meaning is thereby triggered.

A further undisputed fact is that the process of S-interpretation stops somewhere, rather than being carried on *ad infinitum*. The practical requirement of brevity is one reason for that. In addition, at some point of the process, an interpretation is produced that *does* fit the case at hand, i.e., that is no longer contextually inadequate. Such an interpretation is then 'clear enough' in so far as the particular use of the text is concerned, and no further search is reasonably needed. This is the import of the maxim *interpretatio cessat in claris*. It can be understood as both describing the S-interpretation process and as a second-order directive for the practice of S-interpretation, which calls for the process to stop if (reasonable) clarity is achieved (Wróblewski 1983a: 44ff.; 1985a: 36, 52ff.).

The pragmatization of the notion of clarity outlined above permits to use soundly this notion while maintaining the criticism of the traditional doctrine. In order to be brought to full fruition, it must be combined with a conception of the communicative acts performed in the use of legal texts formulated in a legal fuzzy language.

By 'communicative act' we understand here the use of a legal text in two types of situations. In the situation of an application of a law, the decision-maker uses the text as a normative basis for his decision, and, if the text is not clear for the case at hand, he makes an operative S-interpretation (Ferrajoli 1966; Wróblewski 1959: Chapter 3; 1985a: Chapter 4). Operative S-interpretation is part of an application of the law, and, as such, corresponds — to an extent — to the classical and important problem of adjudication (cf. Golding

1975: 111-113; Unger 1975: 80, 88-92). In the situation of systematization of the law in force (Aarnio 1977: Chapter 3.4; 1979: Chapter 4.2; 1983: Chapter 8), which is the leading task of legal dogmatics (conceived here as *pars pro toto* of a legal science), doubts could occur concerning the meaning of the systematized legal texts, and then we have to do with a doctrinal S-interpretation. Some authors claim that SL-interpretation is involved in doctrinal interpretation, whereas S-interpretation is involved in operative interpretation (Plecszka and Gizbert-Studnicki 1984). But there is no need to posit different processes or kinds of interpretation for the two cases. The difference can be explained by the fact that the doubts which trigger the process of interpretation arise out of 'mismatches' between the direct reading of the text and different levels or kinds of context: in one case, the broad culturally determined background; in the other, the specific situation of the particular case to which the law is being applied.[14]

In what follows we will use as a standard example the operative S-interpretation, discussing the fuzziness of the legal language with respect to this case. Doctrinal S-interpretation, as argued above, does not involve a different process, but differs only in that it has to do with a different kind of context, namely not facts but normative constructs and the presupposed properties of the legal system. This will be taken into account below, in our discussion of the 'systemic context'.

A legal text is formulated in legal language, which is conceived as a species or register of natural everyday language.[15] For the present purposes, two features of natural language should be recalled, namely fuzziness and context-dependency. Fuzziness is explained below in the particular case of the referential semantics dealing with names and/or descriptions found in the legal language used in the situation of application of the law. We accept the typological differentiation between fuzzy, hard, and soft languages according to their referential semantic and pragmatic properties (Wróblewski 1983b, 1985c). Context-dependency, already discussed above, is one of the features of legal language, which can either restrict or enhance the doubts that can arise in concrete situations, leading to an interpretative process.

Legal texts are formulated in a legal fuzzy language. Let us ask whether a portion of reality, x, belongs or does not belong to a class A determined by a name or description in a language L. Languages are divided in three types depending on the way in which the statement *x belongs to A* (symboli-

cally $x \in A$) is asserted or denied. It is assumed that the user of L has a perfect linguistic competence and knows all the features of x relevant for stating the relationship between x and A.

A hard language is a language in which, for every x, it is true that either x belongs to A or that it is not the case that x belongs to A:

[1] $(x)((x \in A) \vee \sim (x \in A))$

A soft language is a language in which, for every x, it is not true that either x belongs to A or that it is not the case that x belongs to A:

[2] $(x) \sim ((x \in A) \vee \sim (x \in A))$

A fuzzy language is a language in which there are x for which [1] is true and there are x for which [2] is true:

[3] $(\exists x)((x \in A) \vee \sim (x \in A)) \wedge (\exists x) \sim ((x \in A) \vee \sim (x \in A))$

The user of a hard language is always in a position to decide whether x belongs or not to A, in the ideal conditions assumed above. This is the case of an artificial language in which all names have a sufficiently precise meaning to make such decisions concerning the description of any x (within their scope) possible. The user of a soft language cannot make such decisions. It is as if he has to create (a substantial part of) the meaning of its terms from case to case. According to some theories of art, the 'language of art' is of this kind in that every interpretation creates a new meaning (cf. Gadamer 1976).

The user of a fuzzy language faces three types of situations when applying the linguistic category A to a given x. He may state that x belongs to A [positive core reference], or that x does not belong to A [negative core reference], or he may be in no position to decide whether x belongs to A or not and no improvement of his linguistic competence or his knowledge of the world could change this undecidability [the penumbra reference].

Both everyday language and legal language are fuzzy in the above sense. This means that there are cases in which the combination of linguistic and factual knowledge is such that pragmatically there is no reasonable doubt that x belongs to A or that x does not belong to A, as well as cases in which such a question is undecidable by any amount of combined linguistic and factual knowledge. In the former case, the decision can be either 'transparent' (the direct meaning of A fits the standard description of x) or 'indirect' (an alternative, appropriate meaning of A and/or a redescription of x are found by means

of the pragmatic maxims of interpretation). Notice that indirectness does not entail that the decision, once reached, is more doubtful or problematic than in transparency.[16] In the fuzzy case, on the other hand, a decision as to whether x should be included or not in A cannot be reached by applying pragmatic maxims alone, and it is, therefore, a genuine act of creative interpretation, without, however, being an arbitrary stipulation.

What complicates the situation is the fact that, so to speak, fuzziness can strike anywhere. One cannot decide *a priori* whether a term is fuzzy or not, because, unlike the ideal situation assumed above, one cannot in fact foresee all the features of reality that may turn out to be relevant to the application of a term in various situations. The term *man* in legal language, for example, has not been traditionally considered fuzzy (assuming that the special case of a foetus or *nasciturus* was explicitly addressed to by legal rules). Fuzziness however appeared with the technological capability of keeping 'alive' human organisms with no cerebral activity. Is this organism a 'man' or not? Is the turning-off of a piece of machinery that feeds 'him' a case of taking away a man's 'life' or not? The problem is clearly not just a problem of interpretation (certainly not of S-interpretation, though one could argue that it is a good example of SL-interpretation), but of decision, guided by ethical, cultural, and other considerations. It seems that legal language's typical fuzziness, related to S-interpretation, is a peculiarity of the adjudication process that employs such a language, and involves specific pragmatic constraints, not generally shared by other kinds and uses of language.

Turning now to contextuality, let us try to single out some of the specific ways in which it affects the understanding of legal texts. The linguistic and meta-linguistic co-text (to use Bar-Hillel's term) of legal discourse has, in addition to the fuzziness mentioned above, several specific characteristics that may generate doubts triggering an interpretative process. These include, for example, the linguistic differentiation of kinds of legal 'speech acts' (e.g., pleading, ruling, interrogating witnesses, indicting, sentencing, legislating, etc.) and 'genres' (laws, statutes, acts, procedural rules, precedents, etc.), whose proper recognition provides the indispensable meta-linguistic frame for correct understanding. A characterization of these and other meta-linguistic co-textual factors is beyond the scope of this paper.

Among the contextual factors relevant for understanding a legal text, we want to single out the systemic and the functional contexts. A legal text that formulates legal rules is always understood in the context of the legal system to

which these rules belong. It is usually assumed that such system has — or should have — the properties of consistency, coherence and eventually completeness and lack of redundancy.[17] Whenever the direct reading of a legal text does not conform to such assumed properties, one can say that the systemic context generates a doubt that prompts a search for a more appropriate interpretation. This is in line with the principle of charity mentioned above. Facing a statute that apparently is inconsistent with other rules of the system or that is obviously redundant, for example, one should ask whether the statute has been correctly interpreted.

A legal text in which legal rules are formulated is created and is operative in a functional context. This context is rather complex, because its components are all those extra-linguistic and extra-systemic factors which are thought of as relevant for the understanding of the legal text (Wróblewski 1959: Chapter 7; 1983a: 43ff.; 1985a: 46ff., 50ff.). The usually acknowledged components are the purposes of particular normative acts and extra-legal rules and evaluations (e.g., stemming from morality and policies). The controversial issue is whether the relevant functional context is that of the time of creation of the rule or of its application. The choice between these two alternatives is evidently dependent upon the ideology or normative theory of interpretation, namely with the choice of either a static or a dynamic cluster of values (Wróblewski 1959: Chapter 4; 1983a: 19ff., 89ff.; 1985a: Chapter 6). Mismatches can arise between the direct reading of the text and either one or both of these functional contexts, leading to functionally generated doubts, and to the corresponding need of interpretation.

The recognition of the different sources of doubt is indispensable for the interpretative process, for it is one of the pieces of information that guide the heuristic process of finding the interpretative hypothesis that overcomes the original mismatch (cf. Chapters 2, 8). Thus, a doubt originating in the systemic context must be solved in such a way that the new interpretation is not, say, inconsistent or redundant with respect to the system.

6. Conclusion

In the light of the above discussion, it is clear that the notion of clarity we are talking about is a pragmatic concept. It is not an inherent quality of a legal text, but depends upon its use in a given communicative situation. The relevant

aspects of such a situation include the users of the language, their epistemic and axiological attitudes, as well as the specific forms of context and co-text mentioned above. When used in different situations, the same text is sometimes (pragmatically) clear and sometimes doubtful. This pragmatic notion of clarity does not rest upon the assumptions necessary for the traditional doctrine of clarity. But with its help one can describe adequately the differences between the situations in which the direct understanding of a legal text is appropriate (situation of isomorphy) and those in which there are doubts generated by various factors (situation of interpretation), one of which may be an essential fuzziness requiring interpretation.

The pragmatic concept of clarity is the counterpart of the pragmatic concept of (reasonable) doubt. A text used in a concrete communicative act is clear if there are no (reasonable) doubts concerning its meaning. In terms of the pragmatic model described in section 4, this means that a point in the L-interpretation process has been reached where to the question "Are there any reasons not to understand the text in this sense?" the answer is "No". If this point is reached the first time such a question is asked, i.e., with regard to the semantically computed 'direct' meaning, then the text is not only clear, but transparent. If it is reached later on in the process, the originally opaque text has been rendered clear through its appropriate indirect interpretation.

The pragmatic concept of clarity permits a reinterpretation of the traditional maxims *interpretatio cessat in claris* and *clara non sunt interpretanda*[18] within the framework of a pragmatically oriented theory of legal interpretation which fits the description of the current use of legal language. Neither as a starting nor as an ending point of the understanding of text is clarity an absolute given. Consequently, legal language has to tolerate the existence of interpretative doubt, even concerning the question of whether a text must or must not be interpreted.

The fact that the law must be operative in society calls for institutional means to solve legal controversies, and such means constrain the interpretative process. Ideally, such institutional means are supposed to be able to settle *ex auctoritate* the clarity issue in any given case. As it turns out, however, authoritative decisions never settle once and for all interpretative questions, since they can be themselves later on — or even in the very same case — subject to further interpretatative doubts. Though the circle or spiral of interpretation never comes to an absolute resting point, it proceeds in a sufficiently ordered and convergent way to provide a sufficient — though not absolutely certain — basis for all practical purposes.

B. The rational lawmaker and the pragmatics of legal interpretation

1. Introduction

Assumptions of rationality play a key role in most current accounts of the nature of ordinary communication. Communication, on these accounts, is a goal-oriented, cooperative process. At the very least, in order to be able to achieve their communicative (and other) goals in such a process, interlocutors must share some notion of the effective available means of achieving such goals, and must presume that each other abides, on the whole, by criteria of choice that optimize effectiveness.

In so far as legal discourse in general, and legal interpretation in particular, is a communicative process, it is also subject to rationality assumptions. In so far as it is a more regimented communicative process than ordinary communication, it should be expected that such assumptions play a more important and reliable role in the interpretation of legal discourse than in the interpretation of other forms of discourse.

In an earlier installment of our interdisciplinary project of bringing together pragmatics and the theory of legal interpretation, we referred to the need to rely on rationality assumptions (see Chapter 15a). We alluded briefly to the theoretical construct of a 'rational lawmaker' as expressing this need. Given the importance of this notion, it deserves a more careful scrutiny — which we purport to provide in the present paper.

Several approaches in the philosophy of language and in the theory of communication emphasize the need to appeal to a notion of rationality.

The 'logic of conversation' initially proposed by H. P. Grice (1975, 1978), which serves as the basis of much of current theorizing in pragmatics, postulates a general 'Principle of Cooperation', from which it deduces four specific 'Maxims' that can be presumed to be obeyed by anyone who engages in communication. Grice indicated that he considers these maxims to be derivable from general principles of rationality applied to communication. Their binding force is such that, in general, ostensive violations of the maxims are not taken to be *real* violations, but rather ways of conveying indirect meanings, which Grice calls 'conversational implicatures' (see Chapter 2, as well as Grice 1975, 1978).

Another approach in pragmatics that appeals extensively to assumptions of rationality is Habermas's (1984) theory of communicative action. Haber-

mas's key idea, in this respect, is that every communicative act, be it descriptive, normative, evaluative, explicative, or even expressive, implicitly makes 'validity claims'. This fact submits all such acts to certain rational requirements of grounding and to rational criteria of criticism, which constitute the core of an "ethics of communication" (cf. Habermas 1984: 38ff.). While Habermas's general emphasis on communicative rationality pushes him towards a transcendentalist position in pragmatics as a whole, which it is difficult to defend, such an emphasis seems much more defensible when restricted to domains where communicative actions have been institutionalized and codified, and where they are bound by more or less explicit norms. As Habermas himself suggests (1984: 35; see also 1984: 81-82), legal discourse is a prime example of such domains.

Rationality assumptions governing communication — both in the Gricean and in the Habermasian versions — are indeed clearly normative. While this does not justify the use of the very broad term 'ethics' to describe them, one can certainly speak of an 'axiology of communication'. Engaging in communication presupposes a form of rationality that binds a person to certain norms entailing certain obligations. At the very least, persons interacting communicatively have a 'duty to make oneself understood' and a 'duty to understand' (see Chapter 4). Such duties are primarily interpersonal. But they are, indirectly, duties towards society as a whole, for their systematic infringement by many would seriously damage the reliability of society's means of communication (see Davidson 1985).

In trying to capture the essence of the problem of interpretation, some philosophers of language have depicted an imaginary situation of 'radical interpretation': starting only from observations about the physical behavior and environment of an individual, the interpreter has to reach both an assignment of meanings to the utterances (or other communicative acts) of that individual, and an assignment of mental states (beliefs, desires, etc.) to that individual. In such a situation, clearly specifiable principles of rationality turn out to be indispensable as a tool of interpretation. Regardless of the simplifications that go into the description of such a situation, the principles disclosed by its inspection can be applied to actual situations as well.

It is this last way of analyzing the role of rationality in communication that we have chosen to explore in the present paper. It will be described in some detail in section 2. The next section highlights the role of the construct 'rational lawmaker' in legal reasoning and legal interpretation. Section 4 offers

a characterization of this construct, relating it to the principles presented in section 2. It provides also a dual characterization of the 'rational law-interpreter'. Finally, in section 5 we discuss the role of the 'rational lawmaker' vis-à-vis several 'ideologies' of legal interpretation and the possibility of accommodating this construct with relativizations of the concept of rationality.

2. Rationality and radical interpretation

Davidson (1973, 1975) observed that the problem of assigning a meaning to an utterance cannot be separated from the problem of what beliefs (and desires) we ascribe to the speaker, and that both questions are, in turn, related to the question of which sentences (of his language) the speaker holds true. Interpretation is therefore the task of solving an equation involving at least these three variables. Once the values for any two of them have been established, the third will be determinable. For reasons that need not concern us here, Davidson takes the attitude of 'holding true' as primary, and investigates how, given that the speaker holds a sentence true, the two other variables in the equation determine each other.

Lewis (1974) generalizes Davidson's 'equation', describing the situation of 'radical interpretation' in terms of four factors: (a) the set of all facts about, say, Karl viewed as a physical system (*P*); (b) the set of Karl's propositional attitudes (beliefs and desires) as expressed in our language (A_o); (c) the set of karl's propositional attitudes (beliefs and desires) as expressed in Karl's language (A_k); and (d) the set of Karl's meanings, i.e., the truth conditions of his full sentences as well as the denotations, etc. of the constituents of these sentences (*M*).

The problem of radical interpretation, according to Lewis, is this: "Given *P*, the facts about Karl as a physical system, solve for the rest" (1974: 331). There are a number of constraints that make the problem solvable. These are "the fundamental principles of our general theory of persons", which "tell us how beliefs and desires and meanings are normally related to one another, to behavioral output, and to sensory input" (334). The notion of rationality plays a key role in this theory, whose principles include, among others, the *Principle of Charity* and the *Principle of Rationalization* — both requiring Karl to be represented as a "rational agent". It is the constraining power of the full set of these principles that makes, according to Lewis, the problem of radical inter-

pretation solvable. He outlines a stepwise interpretative strategy whereby, beginning with *P*, we fill in completely first A_o, then M, and finally A_k and determine when Karl speaks transparently and when not.[19]

Apart from the philosophical issue of whether even full knowledge of P is sufficient to *determine* a unique set of propositional attitudes and meanings,[20] there are other problematic features of the situation of radical interpretation, which should be taken into account by anyone trying to extrapolate it to real interpretation.

As defined, the situation of radical interpretation contains two extreme assumptions: omniscience concerning *P* and total ignorance concerning the other three factors. Accordingly, solving the problem of interpretation in such a situation consists in "advancing from omniscience about P alone to omniscience also about A_o, *M* and A_k" (Lewis 1974: 339-340). Needless to say that in real situations of interpretation one cannot assume either omniscience or total ignorance. Even if we had omniscience about *P*, this would hardly help us in our interpretive endeavors, unless we had also immediate access to every fact in *P*, and a way of determining which facts in this very large (if not infinite) set were relevant to the task at hand. Fortunately, it is our non-total ignorance that serves as a guide to search *P* in order to find the (provisionally) relevant data. We usually operate within traditions where certain beliefs, desires and meanings can be standardly assigned to individuals and their utterances. Such 'default' assignments are the starting point in the process of 'checking' the environment for relevant indications that either confirm or disconfirm the initial assignments. Under these circumstances, omniscience becomes unnecessary as a starting point and as a goal of the process of interpretation. Instead, reasonable — though not conclusive — interpretations can be reached, on the basis of reasonable — though not complete — evidence.[21]

Another point to be noted about the principles and their use is that they imply a 'projective' element. Roughly, this means that in interpreting Karl, we use ourselves as a model: in order to ascribe to him certain beliefs and desires, we figure out what beliefs and desires we would have, if we were to behave like Karl when exposed to the same stimuli as he is (other things being equal). Thus, when applying the *Rationalization Principle*, the evaluation of what counts as 'good reasons' is our evaluation, taking in due account the full set of circumstances surrounding Karl's behavior. Similarly, when applying the *Charity Principle*, we in fact take as a reference point what *we* would have believed (or desired) in Karl's place, once we take into account the differences

between Karl's and our life histories, circumstances, etc. (Lewis 1974: 336). There is no way to escape this 'subjective' bias in interpretation. However, as will be seen below, the use of the notion 'rational lawmaker' allows for a measure of 'idealization' that overrides part of that subjectivity: we do not 'project' onto the rational lawmaker our biases, distortions, inconsistencies, etc., but only our idealized standards of rationality (which unfortunately may be biased too, for all we know).

Strategies of interpretation in real situations thus depart from those in the imaginary situation of radical interpretation in a number of ways. Accordingly, though the principles singled out in the imaginary situation certainly function both as regulative and operative principles of interpretation, they do so in varying degrees for different kinds of communicative situations. It can be said that the more a communicative situation is regimented as to its language, its norms of interpretation, its fact-finding and fact-presenting procedures, the more it lends itself to a more or less straightforward application of the principles that embody the assumptions of communicative rationality.

3. The rational lawmaker and legal discourse

3.1 The rational lawmaker and legal reasoning

Legal reasoning occurs in legal discourse. The main types of linguistic activity yielding legal discourse are lawmaking, law-applying and law-describing. Their results constitute a corpus of lawmaking decisions, law-applying decisions, and legal sciences statements and theories.

All these activities involve, to some extent, legal reasoning. Such a reasoning can be treated as either heuristic or justificatory. The former approach is most appropriate for the analysis of the process leading to a decision or to the formulation of a statement (or theory); the latter, to their justification. In philosophical terms, the former approach is concerned with the "context of discovery", and the latter, with the "context of justification/validation" (Hempel 1966: 14-18).

The concept of a 'rational lawmaker' can be viewed as a reconstruction of the context of discovery in terms borrowed from the context of justification. The lawmaker is rational precisely in so far as the process whereby he/she takes his/her decisions is supposed to be entirely guided by explicit and deductive justificatory arguments. Nevertheless, even the rational lawmaker

has to take into account the fact that the laws he makes will serve as the basis for law-applying decisions performed not by ideal, but by real people, in real circumstances. This means that the law-applying decisions will necessarily involve *interpreting* the law in unforeseen situations, according to rules that are not only deductive in nature.

In contemporary legal systems, lawmaking appears in several forms. In statutory/civil law systems, the main 'source of law' is the enactment of normative acts, thought of as unilateral decisions of the competent state organ. Other sources of law, such as agreements, legal practice, and sanctioning of customary rules, are of secondary importance.

In common law systems, the main source of law is judicial decisions. In the contemporary common law countries, there is, however, a growing bulk of enacted law, due to the interventionist policies of the state. In our analysis, it is sufficient to deal with lawmaking in the form of enactment, because it is in this form that the main issues related to the rational lawmaker emerge.

Legal interpretation occurs in all areas of legal discourse. The lawmaker too interprets rules, and so do all law-applying agencies. Legal science is also concerned with interpretation in its effort to systematize bodies of law in their applications. Interpretation is required, first and foremost (but not *only,* see Chapter 15a), when a legal text is not 'transparent' or clear enough in the concrete situation of its use.

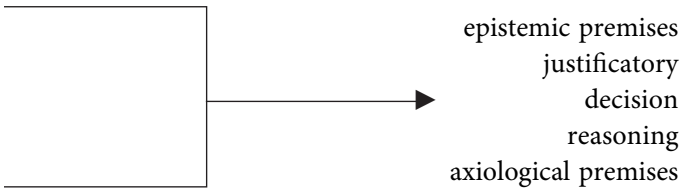
We will deal here, however, only with one type of legal interpretation, namely judicial operative interpretations made by a judge when applying the law (Ferrajoli 1966; Wróblewski 1985a: Chapter 4). For, in statutory/civil law systems this is the main point of interest, since societal expectations of the best legal decisions are concerned with judicial decisions. These decisions are expected to satisfy in the highest possible degree such values as justice under the law, legality, objectivity, impartiality, predictability, repeatability, and so on. They are therefore expected to be subject to the highest degree of procedural control (Wróblewski 1973: Chapters 3-9).

Judicial operative interpretation, in the narrow sense, occurs in the case of doubt due to lack of the necessary clarity or transparency required for the application of the law. There are many sources for this doubt, but all of them are case-centered and consequently context-dependent (Wróblewski 1985c: 246-250). Such an interpretation, therefore, always involves a pragmatic component.

In legal science dealing with the systematization of the law in force, a 'doctrinal interpretation' is also needed (Aarnio 1977: Chapter 3.4; 1983: Chapter 8; 1987: Chapter 3). Although the sources of doubt in this kind of interpretation are, as a rule, different from those affecting operative interpretation, there are no relevant differences either in justificatory reasoning or in the construct of the rational lawmaker. It is, therefore, justified to focus our analysis on the judicial operative interpretation within statutory/civil law systems.

Legal interpretive reasoning is a species of legal reasoning. In legal reasoning, as in any reasoning, the idea of rationality is implied. Without discussing various conceptions of rationality in practical discourse (e.g., Aarnio 1987: Chapter 4.2.4; Geraets 1979; Agassi and Jarvie 1987; Alexy 1989), it is sufficient to make a minimal assumption, which will serve as a starting point of our analysis. We assume that in our legal culture it is expected that a legal decision is arbitrary, i.e., that it is justifiable by 'good reasons'. Rationality is thought of as the justifiability of a decision. Minimally, it simply consists in the ability to single out and point to the good reasons that allegedly underlie a decision.

The deep structure of a justified legal decision consists, essentially, in a set of epistemic and axiological premises which, by means of the accepted rules of legal (justificatory) reasoning, yield the decision (as the conclusion of the reasoning).



The rules of justificatory reasoning are the accepted rules of logic *sensu lato,* although their precise nature is controversial in theories of legal reasoning. Some theories take these rules to be those of formal logic, others, of informal logic, and still others, of argumentation.[22]

The epistemic premises include the knowledge concerning the law and the facts considered relevant for the decision under consideration. The axiological premises include evaluations and/or specific rules, which are relied upon for the justification.

We assume that there is a difference between these two sets of premises, but we do not discuss the philosophical basis for this distinction, just as we have set aside a discussion of the nature of practical reasoning. We further assume that, in the language of legal discourse, the combination of these two types of statements is meaningful and, therefore, that they can be jointly used in justification.

The conclusions, in legal justificatory reasoning, are various sorts of decisions, e.g., regarding validity, interpretation, evidence, choice of consequences, etc. (Wróblewski 1983a: 59-64; 1984a: 259-265; 1986b: 206-212). Here, we are interested only in decisions of (operative) interpretation, though similar problems arise in connection with the other kinds of decision, and our claims can be eventually generalized to them.

In legal reasoning, the epistemic and axiological premises, as well as the justificatory rules, make an implicit reference to a person and/or construct: the lawmaker. A critical analysis discloses three types of lawmaker referred to in these contexts.[23]

First, the lawmaker is viewed as a historical agency enacting the law. He/she is thought of as a person or a collective body having some knowledge and a more or less determined axiological attitude expressed in his/her evaluative statements. Especially in the traditional language of legal discourse, one refers to the 'will of the historical lawmaker', treated as a past historical fact, which has to be reconstructed with the help of various heuristic instruments, prominent among which are the *travaux préparatoires*.

Secondly, the lawmaker is thought of as the actual lawmaker, i.e., as the agency that enacts the law at the time of making a legal interpretive decision. This lawmaker is also a real entity, having its own 'will'. But he/she is not that of the past, but of the present. He/she supports all currently valid law, considered as a consistent and coherent set of enacted rules.[24] The reconstruction of his/her will is centered on the present, and depends on the use of adequate instruments for this purpose.

Thirdly, the lawmaker is treated neither as the past nor as the present law-enacting agency, but as a construct used for justificatory and eventually also heuristic purposes. According to this view, the two preceding conceptions of the lawmaker are considered as inadequate and naïve, for they assume that the lawmaker has a definite intention and a knowledge of the future which it is impossible to have, that he/she displays full consistency and coherence in his/her opinions and evaluations, and possesses perfect mastery of language. This

would be impossible for any single lawmaker and, *a fortiori*, for any corporate body such as a parliament. The upshot of this critique is that the lawmaker referred to in legal reasoning cannot be a real, past or present, agency, but is rather a construct, which functions as an ideal point of reference for the purpose of *defining* the rationality of a decision. In short, such a lawmaker is either a *rational* or a *perfect* lawmaker.[25]

Only the lawmaker as an argumentative construct is relevant for an analysis of legal reasoning. For the 'historical' and 'current' lawmaker are concepts which (a) cannot be defended against quite simple and obvious criticism (as illustrated above), and (b) are not necessary for the purposes of understanding legal reasoning. A characterization of the 'rational lawmaker' construct will be given below.

3.2 The rational lawmaker and the meaning of a legal text

In order to discuss the problems of legal interpretation, we treat legal texts as a result of lawmaking by enactment, formulated in a legal language.

Legal language is singled out as a register of natural language (cf. Wróblewski 1985c: 239ff.; Gizbert-Studnicki 1986). It has semantic and pragmatic, but no syntactic distinctive features, as compared to natural language in general. Unlike 'planned' or 'artificial' languages, legal language evolves historically. It is the result of the practical needs of lawmaking and law-application. The lawmaker has to opt for a compromise between, on the one hand, accessibility and direct intelligibility of the legal texts for their prospective addressees and, on the other, an adequate level of precision in the formulation of enacted rules.[26] The former requirement drives him/her to keep as much as possible of natural language as it is, while the latter presses for technicality. As a result, while natural language syntax remains unaltered, changes in the vocabulary often occur, either through the introduction of new technical terms, or through the modification of the meanings of existing terms for the purposes of legal regulation (see Chapter 11).

A rational lawmaker does not necessarily refrain from formulating legal texts with the help of loose and evaluative expressions — e.g., in the so-called general clauses. By so doing he/she purposefully creates interpretive leeway, leaving to the law-applying organs the task of a more precise determination of meaning. This, however, is coupled with a critical procedure, whereby the rational lawmaker analyzes the way in which his or her texts have been

interpreted. If this interpretation (to a sufficiently high degree) does not correspond with his or her aims, then he/she either modifies the legal text or else stimulates a binding interpretation, whenever this institution is available in a given legal system (cf. Wróblewski 1985b).

Legal language shares with common natural language two important features. First, the contextuality and co-textuality of the meanings of its terms; second, its pragmatic fuzziness. The meanings of legal terms are dependent on the linguistic, systemic, and functional contexts of their use; and these terms are fuzzy in the sense that there is always a semantic penumbra where the question of their applicability remains open (cf. Wróblewski 1985c: part 3; see also Chapters 3 and 15a).

An enacted legal text should be conceived as bearing a communicative message, sent from a sender (*S*) to some receiver (*R*), through a noisy channel. The sender produces a text in his/her language (L_s), which the receiver handles as a text in *his/her* language (L_r). Taking into account semantic and contextual variability, the usual model of communication must be further modified at least as follows:

C [*S*] → text in L_s with meaning M_s in context C_s → channel + noise [*R*] → text in L_r with meaning M_r in context C_r

The 'technical' problem of communication (cf. Shannon and Weaver 1963), i.e., the ways to ensure reasonable transmission through an inevitably noisy channel, shared by all forms of communications, can be left aside. We will focus on the pragmatic and semantic aspects of the process. In particular, we will consider only the 'legally relevant' parts of both contexts, C_s and C_r. For simplicity, we will consider only cases in which the 'message' is a legal rule. From the point of view of the 'sender', who issues the rule, the legally relevant context is a given situation of enactment, taken into account in his activity of lawmaking — to be symbolized as C_{s1}. From the point of view of the 'receiver', say, a judge applying the rule, the relevant context is a (potentially different) situation of application — to be symbolized as C_{ra}. Schema C can then be specified as follows:

C* [*S*] → text in L_s with meaning M_s in context C_{s1}, → channel + noise [*R*] → text in L_r with meaning M_r in context C_{ra}

In terms of **C***, the problem of interpretation faced by *R* consists in ensuring that M_r-in-C_{ra} is as close as possible to M_s-in-C_{s1}, in spite of (potential or

actual) differences in language and context, and of possible channel distortions. Such a task is crucially dependent on the receiver's perception/construction of the sender, i.e., of his/her language and context. This in turn requires a decision about 'who is the sender'. Is he/she the historical lawmaker, the actual lawmaker, or a construct — the 'rational lawmaker' — to which the 'ideal form' of the message is ascribed (cf. above, 3.1)? The answer to this question is crucial for the theory and/or ideology of legal interpretation (cf. Wróblewski 1959: Chapter 4; 1972; 1985a: Chapter 6). Depending on such an answer the features of L_s and C_s are defined, and the corresponding meaning of the text is reconstructed.

Using schema **C***, we single out three types of meaning dealt with in theories of legal interpretation. These types are reconstructions of ideas loosely expressed in legal literature.

The first type is based on the idea of the historical lawmaker. He/she is the sender of the message, i.e., of a legal text expressed in legal language L_s, and her/his communicative intention (or 'will') is, *ex hipothesi,* the 'speaker's meaning' M_s of the text in question. This meaning is formulated in the *historical* situation of enactment C_{s1}, which is the relevant part of the sender's context (C_s). The receiver *R* who is supposed to operatively apply (and therefore interpret) the rule must adopt a self-effacing attitude, on the assumption that the meaning to be captured is entirely determined by the sender. In particular, s/he must avoid projecting onto C_{s1} and L_s any of the features of C_{ra} and L_r. The task is to find an appropriate rendering (L_r with meaning M_r in C_{ra}) which *reproduces* the sender's meaning (cp. Chapter 9 on the 'cryptographic model').

In its 'naïve' versions, this type of approach may tend to overlook the differences in context and language, i.e., to assume that $L_s = L_r$ and $C_{s1} = C_{ra}$. In its more sophisticated versions, the approach adopts a 'classical' hermeneutic position: the interpreter is aware of the differences of language and context, but is nevertheless supposed to be able to overcome them by a deliberate and sustained effort to 'wear the sender's boots'.

The second type is a variant of the first, based on the idea of the *actual* lawmaker. Here the interpreter is allowed to take into account more substantially the possible differences between the situation of application and the situation of lawmaking, in the sense that the former might not have been fully envisaged by the sender. Still, in this approach, interpretation is subordinated to the (supposed) actual sender's meaning in the sense that M_r should be an

answer to the hypothetical but 'psychological' question: what *would* the actual lawmaker have meant were s/he faced with this particular case?

The third type of construction of the meaning of the legal text is based on the idea of a rational lawmaker. The receiver here *reconstructs* the sender's meaning, by projecting onto the sender (or the text) a notion of rationality. S/he asks not what the sender *would* have meant, but what the sender *should* have meant. M_r is thus a result of the application of the receiver's ideas about rational law enactment. This kind of approach underlies in fact most of contemporary operative interpretations, even though some of them are still phrased in terms of the 'will' of the historical or actual lawmaker.

There is a fourth type of approach, which grants 'total freedom' to the receiver, and corresponds to what is called 'philosophical hermeneutics' (cf. Gadamer 1976). Here, the meaning of a legal text is entirely constructed or created by the receiver, not only in terms of some notion of rationality, but making use of the full set of assumptions of C_r. Some ideas of this type were expressed earlier in this century by the more radical partisans of free-law movements, but are no longer relevant today (see Chapters 9 and 29).

It is our contention that the third type of construction, the one that appeals to the notion of a rational lawmaker, is not only the most widely used in operative interpretations, but also the one most appropriate given the pragmatic constraints of legal interpretation. Such an interpretation must satisfy, within reasonable boundaries, the requirements of *certitudo* (or 'objectivity') and *brevitas* (see Chapter 15a). Were it to grant total freedom of interpretation in the hermeneutic manner, it would not achieve the former. Were it to require (or assume) complete fidelity to the intentions of the historical or actual lawmaker, it would not achieve the latter (nor, possibly, the former). A reasonable conception of the 'rational lawmaker', on the other hand, which shares a number of features with the assumptions of rationality underlying pragmatic theory, can overcome both drawbacks.

4. The rational lawmaker and the rational law-interpreter

4.1 Profile of the rational lawmaker

The construct 'rational lawmaker' can be characterized by a number of conditions adapted from the pragmatic principles described in section 2.1.

(1) The rational lawmaker is a rational agent, who has good reasons for his/her decisions.
(2) The good reasons in question fulfill certain formal criteria, e.g.: no good reasons can be inconsistent (epistemic premises) or incoherent (axiological premises); the decisions are reached through the application of valid rules of legal reasoning.
(3) Regarding his/her epistemic premises, the rational lawmaker believes in the facts that he should believe.
(4) Regarding her/his axiological premises, the rational lawmaker should accept or desire what he ought to desire.
(5) The rational lawmaker's decisions and their justifications are formulated in legal language. It is assumed that the rational lawmaker is a competent user or, in Chomsky's terms, an 'ideal speaker', of that language.
(6) The rational lawmaker is also a competent user of the rules of legal reasoning relevant for his/her decisions.
(7) The rational lawmaker actually uses the rules of legal language.
(8) The rational lawmaker actually uses in his/her justifications the valid and relevant rules of legal reasoning.

These characteristics are related in a straightforward way to the principles described in 2.2. and in Chapter 9. (1) and (2) correspond to the *Rationalization Principle*, (3) and (4) to the *Charity Principle*. (5) and (6) spell out the *competence* of the rational lawmaker; they correspond to the *Principle of Truthfulness*. (7) and (8) are stronger versions of the *Principle of Manifestation*; they constrain the rational lawmaker to actually *use* his/her competence. The equivalent to the *Triangle Principle* is best construed, in our context, not as a characteristic of the rational lawmaker, but rather as a property of legal language. In spite of its fuzziness and context-dependence, legal language ensures sufficient uniformity to allow for regular and reliable 'translations' or interpretations of the rational lawmaker's utterances into the interpreter's utterances.

4.2 Profile of the rational law-interpreter

In order to be able to use the construct 'rational lawmaker' the context of interpretation, which includes the law-interpreter, must be construed as satisfying a number of presuppositions. Such presuppositions in fact underlie much of current legal reasoning (cf. Wróblewski 1985d). The presupposi-

tions of such reasoning, in so far as they deal with what makes justification possible, can be considered as an expression of the assumption of rationality of legal interpretation.

There are three groups of presuppositions of legal reasoning, which can be taken as the characterizing justificatory interpretive reasoning as well: factual presuppositions (*PF*), rule presuppositions (*PR*) and value presuppostions (*PA*). Each of them refers to different aspects of the context of lawmaking and law-interpreting/applying. The first group refers to general properties of the context. The second group refers to properties of the various sets of rules involved in lawmaking and law-interpreting. It comprises presuppositions relating to legal language (*PRL*), to legal reasoning (*PRR*) and to legal systems (*PRS*). The third group singles out the axiological assumptions, which are particularly important in a normative context such as the law.

PF_1 There exist the following interpreter-independent realities: a legal language, situations that make the use of this language pragmatically meaningful, legal rules formulated in the legal language, a legal system, directives of legal interpretation.

PF_2 A legal rule is interpreted in a situational context existing independently of the interpreter.

PF_3 The interpreter has access to the realities mentioned in PF_1 to the relevant contextual information mentioned in PF_2 and s/he possesses the required 'legal competence', i.e., mastery of the systems of rules and values mentioned in the following presuppositions.

PRL_1 The (semantic) rules of the legal language are relevant for the meaning of the legal rules expressed in it.

PRL_2 In the application of a legal rule it is in general impossible to determine the meaning of the rule solely on the strength of the semantic rules of the legal language in which the rule is formulated.

PRL_3 The pragmatic rules of language use are relevant for the interpretation of a legal rule in a context of application.

PRL_4 The legal rules as formulated in the lawmaker's language and context are translatable into the law-interpreter's language and context.[27]

PRR_1 Application of the rules of legal reasoning is necessary for the justification of interpretive legal decisions.

PRR_2 The premises of legal interpretive decisions are at least in part independent of the interpreter.

PRR_3 The epistemic premises of interpretive decisions are internally consistent, and their axiological premises are internally coherent.
PRS_1 An interpreted rule is a part of a legal system.
PRS_2 Some features of a legal system are relevant for determining the meaning of an interpreted rule.
PRS_3 A legal system is at least locally consistent and coherent.
PA_1 Evaluation is relevant in operative interpretation at least for the choice and use of directives of interpretation.
PA_2 Evaluations are part of the argumentation justifying interpretive decisions.

Just as a rational law-interpreter cannot interpret a legal rule without assuming that it was enacted by a rational lawmaker, so too a rational lawmaker must assume that the rules s/he enacts will be interpreted rationally, i.e., according to the presuppositions above. In a sense the dual set of conditions referring to the rational lawmaker and interpreter specifies, ideally, the minimal set of mutually *shared* knowledge (see Schiffer 1972) required for ideal rational interpretation. The more an actual situation of interpretation does not warrant such an assumption of mutuality, the less it can yield a 'rational' interpretive decision.

5. Rationality and the ideologies of legal interpretation

5.1 The rational lawmaker and the ideology of legal interpretation

In operative interpretation (i.e., interpretation made in the course of applying a law), the construct of the rational lawmaker is effectively used. That is to say, arguments for choosing among the various possible meanings of a doubtful legal rule do refer to the rational lawmaker.

These arguments rely on the assumption that the rational lawmaker would always choose legal rules which are the best suitable ones for implementing the purposes he sets for the law, to his/her best knowledge and justified evaluations. The arguments can then function either in a positive or in a negative way. The former consists in supporting one choice of meaning on the grounds that it fits the rational lawmaker's criteria; the latter, in rejecting a purported meaning on the grounds that it doesn't fit those criteria.

In neither case the argument is conclusive. Rarely — if at all — the reference to the rational lawmaker determines an interpretive choice. Usually more substantive reasons justifying the choice are required.

The theoretical analysis of the conditions of interpretation, as well as the observation of how interpretive decisions are justified in legal practice, lead to a description of an interpretive decision in terms of a normal formula (cf. Wróblewski 1983a: 61; 1984a: 261; 1985a: 65; 1985c: 251; 1986b: 210). This formula differs from the usual rendering 'Law *L* has the meaning *M*' by explicitly including the justifications that lead to the interpretive decision. This is linked with the basic idea that a decision is rational to the extent to which it is fully justified. In principle, the justification must envisage all the relevant arguments needed to justify the decision.

N The legal rule *R* in the legal language L_i and/or in context C_i has meaning *M* according to the directives of interpretation DI_{11}, DI_{21}, ..., $DI_{n1;}$ DI_{12}, DI_{22}, ..., DI_{n2}, and the evaluations V_{1i}, V_{2i}, ..., V_{ni} necessary for the choice and use of the directives.

The theoretical construction of the normal formula assumes that (interpreted) legal text is expressed in a contextually dependent fuzzy language (Wróblewski 1983b; 1985c: 24lff.; Peczenik and Wróblewski 1985; see also Chapter 15a). To remove this fuzziness in a situation of doubt, the semantic rules of legal language are not sufficient. Arguments are needed, which rely upon directives of interpretation and evaluations. It is the use of these arguments that allows one to consider the interpretive decision a *rational* decision.

The first-order directives of legal interpretation (DI_1) determine how to use the various kinds of context in order to establish the meaning of *R*: the linguistic context (the so-called 'co-text' of *R* — see Chapter 8a), the systemic context (the legal system to which *R* belongs) and the functional context (the psycho-sociological environment where *R* has been enacted and/or applied). Each of these directives may yield different meaning assignments: e.g., the linguistic directives of the legal language may lead to a meaning opposed to the functional meaning based on the role of the rule as an instrument to achieve the goals of certain policies. The judge has to decide which meaning ought to prevail, and his decisions are justified by second-order directives of interpretation (DI_2).

The evaluations serve at first to establish the *need* for interpretation, i.e., they are the basis for a judgment concerning the lack of 'transparency' of the

rule in a given situation of application, viz. *lex non clara est*. They are further required in order to justify the choice of particular directives of interpretation (the inventory of these directives is very large), and to make use of them.[28]

The meaning *M* is established either *in general* or with reference to a specific situation of use of the rule. Operative interpretation is usually concerned with the latter, and thus refers to a concrete situation. In doctrinal interpretation of legal dogmatics, on the other hand, the concern is to determine the meaning of a rule generally. Even in this case, however, an implicit reference is made to an 'ideal' or 'rational' situation of use, and the need to rely upon directives of interpretation and evaluations is not obviated, also in these cases.

The comparative analysis of evaluations in legal interpretation, both as formulated in the legal sciences and as used in practice, leads to an elaboration of the conception of an 'ideology of interpretation' (Wróblewski 1959: Chapter 4; 1972; 1985a: Chapter 6). An 'ideology' consists in a set of directives of legal interpretation and of evaluations, as they appear in *N*.

There are two basic types of ideology of interpretation, depending on the kind of underlying values they comprise. The 'static' ideology favors such values as legal certainty, legal security, legal predictability and the stability of the law. The 'dynamic' ideology is more concerned with the adequacy of the law to the changing needs of life. These needs are understood as the axiology underlying the functional context of the operation of the law at the time of interpretation (though it takes into account the systemic context as well).
The static ideology corresponds to the construal of meaning as the sender's meaning, taken as identical to the 'will' of the historical lawmaker. The idea of meaning that correlates with the 'dynamic' ideology, on the other hand, is that of the modified sender's meaning, which can change even though there is no change in the 'letter of the law'.

The former identification can be argued for as follows. Since legal interpretation ought to implement legal certainty, legal security, legal predictability and legal stability, the meaning of the legal text should be as stable as its formulation, i.e., should remain the same as long as the lawmaker does not modify the text by enacting a new law. This stability of meaning is ensured when meaning is defined as the will of the historical lawmaker, i.e., as a past psychological fact that cannot change in time. In the terminology of this essay, the historical lawmaker is the sender of the legal message formulated in his language (L_s), and the meaning is the sender-meaning (M_s), determined *inter alia* by the historical context of law-making (C_s).

The argument for construing the meaning relevant for the dynamic ideology as the modified sender's meaning relies on this ideology's different basic orientation. Legal interpretation ought to implement the valve of adequacy of law to the changing needs of life. If the 'letter of the law' — the legal text does not change in spite of the changes in life conditions, then the interpretive process ought to assume a change in meaning. Making the law adequate to life thus becomes the task of the interpreter: he has to ascribe the relevant changes in meaning to an actual lawmaker, acting in the current context. In our terminology, this means that the dynamic ideology uses a modified sender-meaning, viewed in the light of the receiver's context (C_{ra}), and consequently not identical to M_s, but rather closer to M_r. In extreme conceptions of the free-law movements, the meaning in question is simply equated without further ado to M_r (cf. 3.2 above).

The rational-meaning construct is ambivalent with respect to the distinction between static and dynamic ideologies of interpretation. The reason is that the justifications contained in the ideology can use static values, dynamic values, or a combination thereof, without any reference to a historical or actual lawmaker treated as a real person.

In the current legal culture there are directives of legal interpretation accepted both by the static and dynamic ideologies. They are based on relevant properties of legal language and legal systems (cf. Wróblewski 1983a: 90-91). But these common directives are not sufficient to eliminate all interpretive doubts; consequently, their existence does not obviate the need to add to the interpretive apparatus some further 'ideology'.

The opposition between static and dynamic ideologies of legal interpretation is based on the most essential values they accept. Nevertheless, in legal literature their axiological underpinning is not made explicit, and these ideologies appear in the guise of 'theories of interpretation' (cf. Wróblewski 1959: Chapter 4). One of them is the so-called 'subjective theory of interpretation', which defines the meaning of a legal text as the will of the historical lawmaker. The opposed theory is the 'objective theory of interpretation', which treats the meaning of the legal text as independent of the historical lawmaker, and therefore as 'objective'. This 'objective meaning' may change according to many factors, such as the will of the actual lawmaker, or some teleological, sociological and axiological features ascribed to the legal text in the process of interpretation.

Critical analysis shows that the ideologies discussed are implicitly dependent on the view taken regarding the rational lawmaker.

The static ideology, using the concept of the historical lawmaker, in fact ascribes to this real person the qualities of a rational lawmaker who, under this construal, wishes that the legal rules enacted by him or her have *the* meaning s/he assigned to them. Furthermore, such a person is supposed to favor an implementation of the static values.

The dynamic ideology ascribes, in turn, the features of a rational lawmaker to the actual lawmaker. The latter is supposed to make the law adequate to life according to the knowledge of the reality s/he has (epistemic premises) and the values s/he accepts as relevant (axiological premises). The older the valid rules are, the more they should change their meanings according to the changes of the context within which they are operative, because the requirements of life change with time. However, not all dynamic ideologies use the construct of an actual lawmaker: some of them employ, for example, the notion of the 'purposes of law' as an inherent quality of legal rules discovered in the process of interpretation.

The rational lawmaker is *ex hypothesi* presupposed in the third type of ideology. But, as mentioned above, this type does not determine any preference for static or dynamic values. Rather, it stresses the notion of *justification*, and requires only that the values adopted be explicitly stated as part of the justification for the choice of an interpretation. The rational lawmaker construct comprises no substantive 'ethics', except for the axiology (or 'ethics') of justification embedded in communication (cf. 1.2 above). Such an axiology can be regarded as containing a minimal set of values, required for any interpretive ideology, and hence as not able to constitute *per se* a full-fledged ideology.

5.2 The rational lawmaker and the rationality of interpretation

The construct 'rational lawmaker' is, thus, presupposed in any ideology of legal interpretation. The features of that construct, however, are usually left implicit in the positive and/or negative arguments justifying interpretive decisions. This fact hampers their identification and the determination of the precise role they play in such decisions. As a result, one lacks a clear basis for *criticism* and *discussion* of particular decisions and of the process of legal interpretation in general. In particular, it is left obscure which justifications rest on 'minimal' assumptions of rationality, and which hinge on substantive axiological options. By spelling out the assumptions defining the rational lawmaker and law-interpreter, some of these shortcomings can be avoided.

The rational lawmaker must make sure that the legal rules s/he enacts are interpretable (Cf. the 'duty to make oneself understood', Chapter 4). S/he expects that interpretive decisions are rationally justifiable. Therefore, s/he has to make the assumptions of rationality embedded in the characterization of the rational lawmaker and of the rational law-interpreter. The list of such assumptions constitutes the minimal requirement for ensuring the justifiability — hence, rationality — of the process of legal interpretation. They do not determine any theoretical and/or ideological options beyond those required by the pragmatic concept of rationality as applied to legal discourse.

Even though they form a minimal set, such assumptions need not be conceived as being each *necessary* and all of them jointly *sufficient* for the rationality of legal interpretation. For one thing: some of them admit of degrees of fulfillment (more or less truthfulness, charity, rationalization), and there is no well-defined cutoff point below which one can no longer talk of rationality. Clearly, if none of them is applied or if all apply only to a very low degree, the interpretation has not followed the rationality assumptions. And if all are applied to a high degree, almost perfect rationality has been assumed. Between these two extremes there lie most of the actual cases, where the different principles are applied to different degrees, according to the circumstances.[29]

It could even be argued that, contrary to what is usually accepted, some of the traditional rationality assumptions can safely be ignored without thereby impairing the 'rationality' of legal interpretation (and of legal discourse in general). A case in point is the assumption of consistency (of the epistemic and axiological premises, of legal reasoning, of the legal system). In fact, in legal theory there are some reservations concerning the assumed consistency of legal systems. (1) A legal system is considered to be consistent (and coherent) only to some degree, because it is liable not only to spurious contradictions eliminated by the interpreter, but also because it may contain real ones. (2) Legal theorists sometimes employ the conception of a 'principled legal system' — an idealized notion defined in terms of 'legal principles'; these differ from legal rules and are usually inconsistent among themselves, a fact that calls for their 'weighing' when applied in concrete cases.[11] It is now possible to formalize these 'deviances' from strict consistency by means of so called paraconsistent logic, where contradictions can be accepted within a theory without thereby causing the trivialization of the theory. But this is a topic we cannot pursue here.[30]

Another source of relativization for the principles of rationality here employed lies in the 'projective' nature of the use of these principles (see section 2.2). Obviously the interpreter's conception of rationality is, ultimately, what will determine the interpretation. Still, in the regimented sphere of legal interpretation, the constraints put on the 'rational law-interpreter' force any interpreter to construe his or her notion of rationality by reference to a certain idealized notion of rationality prevailing in the legal tradition. This self-reflective meta-constraint allows for the elimination of strictly subjective biases and similar considerations. It does not, of course, eliminate historical and cultural relativity.

Whatever its limitations and the need to relativize its use, the construct 'rational lawmaker' has, from the point of view of rationality (and perhaps also of ethics) a significant advantage over its competitors, the historical and the actual lawmaker, in so far as legal interpretation is concerned. For, if the speaker's meaning we are after is that of a historical or current individual or group, the interpreter's task is subordinated to whatever turns out to be their actual communicative intentions. The interpreter's use of the principles of charity, rationalization, etc., will be tolerated only as part of his/her hermeneutic exercise. If, however, the regulative figure of the rational lawmaker is the one whose communicative intention is to be reconstructed, the interpreter is in fact allowed to employ the principles that define such a figure *also* in a critical way.

Notes

1. This proviso is necessary because pragmatics deals not only with communicative or social uses of language, but also with those uses of language that are, in some sense, purely private (e.g., in reasoning, problem-solving, dreaming, etc.). It can be thus subdivided into 'sociopragmatics' and 'psychopragmatics'. For details on this proposed subdivision of pragmatics and what it entails, see Dascal 1983, 1985, 1987. In this paper we will be concerned only with sociopragmatics.

2. Dennis Kurzon reminds us that the term 'lawmaker' refers, in the Continental system, to the parliament, while in the Anglo-American system it may also include the court. In the latter case, the judge, by interpreting laws and precedents, may be laying down the law. Yet, in so doing, the judge will be establishing a new legal text whose meaning will have to be determined in later court decisions.

3. The notion of 'clarity' plays a role also in the theory of elegance in law [*elegantia juris*], which is not entirely rhetorical, as its name might suggest, but involves also logical

aspects. See Stein (1961), quoted in Giuliani (1985:9). We are setting aside those cases in which some form of 'unclarity' (e.g., vagueness or ambiguity) is *purposively* used in a legal text. In such cases, the legislature deliberately lets the court interpret the text according to the circumstances. This may either correspond to *genuine* lack of clarity (i.e., the legislature either doesn't know how or doesn't want to make the text explicit) or else to the assumption that the circumstances will easily supply the 'missing' interpretive data. Pragmatically, the latter case amounts to the stage of determining 'utterance meaning' by means of co-textual and contextual information whose nature is indicated by the text itself (see below), and hence does not involve any real unclarity or interpretation problem.

4. "What is clear is not to be interpreted".

5. "Interpretation stops at what is clear".

6. "[W]hen the idea men have of something is distinct, and all those who understand a language form the same idea when a word is uttered, it would be useless to define it, since one has already achieved the aim of a definition, which is to ensure that the idea attached to it be clear and distinct. This is what happens in very simple things of which all men have naturally the same idea, so that the words through which they are signified are understood in the same way by all those who use them … These are the words 'being', 'thought', 'extension', 'equality', 'duration', or 'time', and similar ones".

7. See Arnauld and Nicole (1983, part 1, Chapters 14-15). For an essentially similar approach to 'emotive meaning', see Stevenson (1944).

8. For a detailed analysis of the semantic-pragmatic aspects of this dispute, see Dominicy (1984:121-131).

9. "A sentence is *clear* when the meanings of all its words are understood just by attending to the words".

10. This definition opens the chapter on interpretation, the first part of Leibniz's most comprehensive text on language, the *Epistolica de historia etymologiae Dissertatio*, written in 1711-1712, in the last years of his life. This text has not been so far critically edited. A preliminary transcription has been made available by Gensini (1991). The quotation here given is from the manuscript in the Leibniz Archive in the Niedersächsischen Landesbibliothek Hannover (LH, IV, 7, B, 3, p. 28).

11. Leibniz also held, in parallel with his much publicized ideal of solving disputes so to speak mathematically, a more realistic view of the need of other means to deal with issues not easily formalizable — means that include non-deductive logical inferences (presumptive logic, probabilities) and hermeneutics, among others. For some indications about this usually overlooked strand in Leibniz's thought, see Dascal (1996; 2001b).

12. For the classical formulation of the doctrine, "Wahre Interpretation ist treue Darstellung des gesetzgeberischen Gedankens", see von Savigny (1849, vol. 1:206). According to the standard version of the 'subjectivist theory', one takes for granted that the meaning of a legal text is the meaning-content of the will of the historical lawmaker. According to the standard version of the 'objectivist theory', the meaning is detached from the lawmaker and changes depending on the co-text and context of the interpreted rule. A possible terminological confusion arises from the fact that, in the discussion of these

theories it is often argued that the former conceives of meaning as something objectively given, while the latter makes it dependent upon subjective choices by the interpreter of the legal text. For the copious literature on the subject see Wróblewski (1959: 159-169, especially notes 26, 30, 32, 38, 41, 42, 44).

13. For another example of a (possible) conversational implicature see note 16 below. For other examples of (b) and (a) see Dascal 1983: *passim*.

14. See Chapter 8a for a typology of contexts and for the notion of 'mismatch'.

15. See Wróblewski (1985c) and references therein. The most up-to-date description is in Gizbert-Studnicki (1986: Chapters 2 and 4).

16. In the case of the State of Israel against John Demianyuk (allegedly Ivan the Terrible of Treblinka), one of the defence attorneys was called to order and required to apologize for suggesting that the trial was a mere propaganda affair. What prompted this reaction of the court was his objection to the prosecutor's insistence that one of the witnesses describe in detail the atrocities generally committed in Treblinka. His argument was that the fact that such atrocities occurred was not in dispute, and remarked: "...unless this [insistence on detailed description] is done for other purposes, the same purposes for which the prosecutor rented this hall for the trial", to which he immediately added: "It is clear to me that it was not the court that rented the hall". As his last remark indicates, he had clearly implied (indirectly) that some propaganda intention was involved in the trial, but wanted to make clear that he did not attribute such an intention to the court itself. When apologizing, he stressed that the court was indeed right in interpreting his remark as (potentially) contemptuous to the court. That is to say, the indirect meaning or "suggestion", assigned to the attorney's remark *via* pragmatic maxims, could be — and actually was — seen as falling under the category of 'contempt', leaving no room for (reasonable) doubt.

17. On the systemic context in legal interpretation, see Wróblewski (1959: Chapter 6; 1983a: 41ff.; 1985a: 38-45, 49ff). The properties of the legal system have been extensively discussed in the literature on legal theory, which cannot be cited here.

18. Cf. Fosterus (1613: 395). Further specifications of the clarity thesis by this author include, among other things: "In claris interpretatio facienda quae convenit cum verbis" (387) [In what is clear, the interpretation should be that which corresponds to the words], and "Interpretatio non est facienda, qua a verborum claritate dissentiat" (418) [An interpretation should not be such as it diverges from the clarity of the words]. Presumably the author is here insisting on the 'literalness' of the interpretation in cases of clarity.

19. For further details of Lewis's theory of radical interpretation, see Chapter 9.

20. Quine's well-known 'indeterminacy of translation' thesis raises serious doubts about this possibility (cf. Quine 1960).

21. In relation to the requirements for the application of the law, it could be said that Lewis's interpretation strategy seeks *certitudo* but requires for that omniscience and possibly also unlimited time, i.e., it sacrifices *brevitas*. More realistic strategies, on the other hand, give up *certitudo* (resting content with 'reasonable' convergence of interpretation) in order to allow for the interpretive process to converge quickly to a reasonable (though not certain) solution.

22. See, e.g., Aarnio et al. 1983; Kalinowski 1965; MacCormick 1978; Peczenik 1983; Peczenik and Wróblewski 1985; Perelman 1980, Chapters 13-17; Wróblewski 1983c, 1986a.

23. For a description and analysis, see Wróblewski 1959, Chapter 4, section 1.3.

24. The most detailed analysis is to be found in Nowak 1973: Chapters 3-7. The difference between the rational (*stricto sensu*) and the perfect lawmaker consists in the degree of their qualification. The former's decision is rational if his reasoning is valid, the value of his premises and rules of reasoning being taken for granted. The latter fulfills additional criteria: his/her factual premises should be 'scientific', and her/his axiological premises should be accepted as valid by the person assessing his/her decisions. In what follows we will generically speak of the rational lawmaker, omitting this difference whenever it is not relevant for the discussion and/or evident from the context.

25. On the trade-off between accessibility/retrieval and precision as a general problem in information-retrieval systems, see Dascal 1978: 156-158.

26. This corresponds to Lewis's 'Triangle Principle' described in Chapter 9.

27. While second order directives determine how to proceed in the interpretive process, evaluations should provide justifications (or criticism) for these directives. For example, the second order 'directives of procedure' specify how to use the first order directives (e.g., whether to test the results of linguistic interpretation by means of systemic interpretation); the second order 'directives of preference' specify how to choose between different meanings resulting from the use of first order directives (e.g., whether to prefer the 'linguistic' or the 'functional' meaning). In the latter case, the choice of the second order directive faces the evaluative problem raised by the conflict between static and dynamic values.

28. Many important concepts cannot be defined in terms of strict criteria or of necessary and sufficient conditions. This is no reason to abandon them as useless for theoretical and practical purposes, for they can be formally characterized in a satisfactory way. For an account of natural kind terms along these lines, see Achinstein (1968).

29. Di Bernardo (1979: part 11, Chapter 2) singles out two types of normative systems, 'thetic' and 'proeretic', where only the former obey the requirement of consistency. According to him, legal systems belong to the latter type. While the term '(general) principle of law' is employed in different senses (cf. Wróblewski 1984b), the notion of 'legal principle' has been elaborated in several works by R. Dworkin. It is discussed and made precise by Alexy (1979). For the notion of a principled legal system, see Wróblewski (1983b).

30. For a survey of paraconsistent logic see Arruda (1988). For an application to deontic logic, see Da Costa and Carnielli (1986). It is because of the empirical difficulty of requiring consistency of a legal system as a whole that we formulated presupposition PRS_3 in terms of 'local consistency'. Each of the other principles could — and perhaps should — be constrained in corresponding ways. Thus, it has been proposed that the Principle of Charity be globally applied, but that its application to specific acts be severely controlled (see discussion in Dascal 1988).

Chapter 16

Understanding jokes and dreams
Sociopragmatics vs. psychopragmatics

Freud observed that we employ similar techniques in manufacturing jokes and dreams. Condensation and displacement yield, in both cases, a distorted and indirect expression of some content. In the light of this similarity, he coined the term 'joke-work', by analogy with 'dream-work', to refer to the set of processes that lead from an underlying, 'unconscious' thought to its manifest expression, in a joke or in a dream, respectively. Words are particularly suited for these kinds of processes, since they are multiply ambiguous and bear a variety of possible associations, thus being capable of yielding the required distortion. Hence, language is systematically exploited in both dreams and jokes, along similar lines. Yet, Freud was aware of the fact that dreams and jokes differ in one important respect. Whereas a dream is 'a completely asocial mental product', a joke is 'the most social of all the mental functions that aim at a yield of pleasure'. The former is not 'made with the intention of being understood', and it 'has nothing to communicate to anyone else'. The latter 'has the unmistakable aim of evoking pleasure in its hearers'. Whereas the dream need not 'set any store by intelligibility' and 'must actually avoid being understood, for otherwise it would be destroyed', being thus free to 'make use of the mechanism that dominates unconscious mental processes, to the point of a distortion which can no longer be set straight', the joke is strictly bound by a 'condition of intelligibility' and 'may only make use of possible distortion in the unconscious through condensation and displacement up to the point at which it can be set straight by the third person's understanding' (Freud 1905: 179).

Freud did not elaborate upon the implications of this fundamental difference, especially those regarding the peculiarities of language use in each of the two activities. It is the purpose of this paper to explore such implications.

Jokes, being a communicative activity, are subject — in their use of language — to the general constraints that regulate the communicative uses of language, which are investigated by 'sociopragmatics'. In their function of

yielding pleasure through the mediation of another person's understanding, their use of language is likely to have, besides, certain specific sociopragmatic properties. Dreams, on the other hand, being a strictly private cognitive activity, need not obey sociopragmatic constraints of any sort. In their use of language, they rather obey principles that govern purely mental uses of language, principles that are investigated by the incipient branch of pragmatics called 'psychopragmatics'.[1] In this respect, they are closer to reasoning, problem-solving, memorizing, theorizing, and other cognitive activities that make use of language, than to jokes. Of course, it is to be expected that, given their peculiar cognitive and affective role, the psychopragmatics of language use in dreams will also be characteristically different from that of the other cognitive processes mentioned.

1

Although Freud began with the analysis of dreams, and then proceeded to the analysis of jokes, we shall adopt the opposite order of exposition. As Freud points out, jokes are an essentially social activity. This means that they are *intended* to produce pleasure in a listener. Furthermore, such an intention is a communicative intention. That is to say, it operates through the listener's *recognition* of the speaker's intention. Laughter produced by tickling is to be distinguished from laughter produced by a joke. In the former case, the intention of the tickler is not a communicative one, and therefore does not require the listener's recognition. The intention is accomplished by a sheer causal process. In the latter case, the causal process must involve the recognition of the intention by the listener. That is to say, it is mediated by consciousness.[2]

Besides the recognition of the general intention of producing laughter, which is characteristic of the 'joke frame', and is conveyed by the device of framing (cf. Goffman 1974), the addressee must also recognize the more specific intentions embedded in the linguistic material of the joke. The recognition of such intentions and the success of the process of (verbal) communication depend upon the subtle interplay of semantics and pragmatics (see Dascal 1983 and Chapter 1).

Normally, speech is used to convey one pragmatic interpretation, and success in communication is measured by the addressee's ability to reach that

interpretation. This is what is usually subsumed by the term 'understanding'. Notice that understanding in communication is always pragmatic understanding. It is not only a matter of understanding the speaker's words (determining the 'sentence meaning'), nor of understanding these words in their specific reference to the context of utterance (determining the 'utterance meaning'), but always a matter of getting to the speaker's intention in uttering those words in that context (determining the 'speaker's meaning'). How this is achieved is the main question of sociopragmatics. For our purposes here, it suffices to recall that there are basically two different ways of conveying a speaker's meaning: *directly* and *indirectly*. A speaker's meaning is directly conveyed when it is identical to the utterance meaning 'computed' by the semantic-pragmatic 'rules' of the language. In this case, pragmatic interpretation is nothing but the 'endorsement' of the utterance meaning by the listener, i.e., its identification as being the speaker's meaning. A speaker's meaning is indirectly conveyed when it differs from the utterance meaning. Pragmatic interpretation, in this case, consists in finding out, by clues in the context, and using the utterance meaning as a starting point, what is the speaker's meaning. This happens, for example, when language is used figuratively, or when the so-called 'conversational implicatures' are conveyed, or, in general, when what is conveyed is implicit rather than explicit. The listener's task, in these cases, is to work out by himself the implicit meaning (to draw inferences, to draw analogies, to infer implicatures, etc.), and to check whether this meaning he has worked out actually fits as a construal of the speaker's meaning.

In the case of jokes, indirectness is systematically exploited. The verbal (and other) material of the joke leaves open — as most verbal material does — a number of possible interpretations (i.e., speaker's meanings). Furthermore, again as in most utterances, hints are given — in the case of jokes, rather heavily — as to what the preferred interpretation should be. Notice that in jokes only *hints* are given, rather than an explicit indication of what this interpretation should be. Otherwise, the alternative interpretation would fade away from the 'horizon of attention', and would be hardly recoverable by the listener. Hence, the preferred interpretation not only happens to be, but *must be* conveyed indirectly, i.e., it must make use of the pragmatic devices that allow for indirectness. This is to say that such an interpretation is actually contributed by the listener, more than by the speaker himself. In fact, the listener construes that interpretation in the course of hearing the joke, and *expects* that the rest of the story will confirm her interpretation. The comic

effect arises when an alternative, non-favored and therefore non-expected interpretation is revealed, at the punch line, as the correct one. The listener can only realize quickly the 'point' of the joke if this alternative interpretation was already there, at the horizon of attention or 'in the offing', ready to be activated if the expectations concerning the preferred interpretation happen not to be fulfilled by ensuing material. Hence, it cannot be ruled out, in the course of the joke, by explicit material that excludes it. This is why indirectness plays a crucial role in jokes.[3]

Consider the following joke. Silberstein is an employee in an Israeli factory. He is in charge of cleaning the offices of the management. Every important visitor that comes to Israel asks to see Silberstein. President Reagan does so, Queen Elizabeth does so, etc. Silberstein's boss is puzzled. To his inquiries, Silberstein replies that the reason for his fame is that every Sunday he appears beside the Pope, in the balcony of St. Peter's Cathedral, in the Vatican. The boss does not believe him. Silberstein invites him to come to Rome next Sunday, and to check the truth of the story. On Sunday, the boss is there in St. Peter's Square, within a crowd of 100,000 people. And he indeed sees Silberstein beside the Pope on the balcony. Silberstein spots his boss in the crowd, and suddenly sees that he falls down. He runs downstairs to assist his boss. When he reaches him, the boss has already recovered. "What happened?" — asks Silberstein. "Well", says the boss, "to see you next to the Pope on the balcony was not much of a surprise to me, but when I heard one of the nuns behind me ask the other 'Who is the guy with the white mantle next to Silberstein?', I fainted!".

The workings of indirectness in this joke are fairly clear. The story stresses, first, the subordinate and menial role of Silberstein as an employee. The overt problem presented, then, is the contradiction between this subordinated role and the importance attached to him by high-ranking visitors. The ostensive explanation given by Silberstein is his unknown association with the Pope. This seems to be a satisfactory explanation, given the importance of the Pope, which, by association, would be transferred to his close friend, associate or perhaps even servant, namely Silberstein. That is to say, the ostensive solution to the contradiction keeps Silberstein in the basically inferior position of someone who derives his own importance from an association with someone who is hierarchically superior to him. In this way, the boss is able to maintain his own position of superiority over his employee. His going to Rome, to check by himself, is viewed as a natural step in the

attempt to confirm a highly implausible claim. In fact, what both the boss and the audience expect to see confirmed is the subordinate role of Silberstein vis-à-vis the Pope. The latter's own statement of the relationship in question lends itself precisely to this interpretation, for he simply says that he appears *beside* the Pope in the balcony. The Pope is presented as the referential anchor by reference to which Silberstein's position is linguistically identified. He does not say, instead, that the Pope appears in the balcony beside him. Furthermore, his rushing downstairs to assist his fainting boss further stresses his position as a servant. This 'literal' reading of the relationship Pope/Silberstein, indirectly conveyed by so many hints, is finally brought to a climax by the assignment of the punch line to a nun, who is supposed to know perfectly well that the Pope is the highest ranking figure in the institution to which she belongs. But that preferred interpretation is never explicitly stated. Had it been, it would thereby suppress alternative interpretations of the relation. In that case, not only the intended alternative interpretation would not come immediately to mind — at the end of the story — but also, if it did, it would be in explicit contradiction with a claim made by the story teller, rather than with something merely implied by him (and mostly contributed by the listener himself), a fact that would be perceived as a defect of the story rather than as a joke.

Jokes, therefore, depend, for their effectiveness, on the existence of the sociopragmatic devices that make indirectness possible.[4] Freud himself stresses the importance of parsimonious hints in the production of a good joke (e.g., Freud 1905: 44), and devotes extensive attention to various forms of what he calls 'indirect representation' (75ff.). In fact, the mere exploitation of such pragmatic devices, in the most obvious form, produces already a comic effect. Imagine a fat lady standing on A's foot in the bus. A says, "Madam, you certainly weigh over 200 pounds"; and the lady replies, "Yes indeed", without moving. The listener has immediately perceived that A's utterance was not an assertion, but rather an indirect request for the lady to get off A's foot, and he would expect the lady, as an adult speaker of the language, to understand this too. Yet, contrary to this expectation, she reacts only to the 'literal' reading of A's utterance.[5]

The requirement of 'intelligibility' of a joke, mentioned by Freud, amounts therefore, among other things, to the requirement that the audience master the sociopragmatic devices needed in order to convey indirectness. And it requires that the teller of the joke make judicious use of these

devices, taking into account the audience's background knowledge, pragmatic competence, etc. (i.e., that the teller fulfill his 'duty to make himself understood' — see Chapter 4). Silberstein's joke would not be funny for an Israeli child that has no idea who is the Pope, what is a nun, etc., nor would the fat lady's story produce laughter in a child who is still struggling to acquire pure semantic mastery of her language, and has not reached the stage of understanding indirect speech acts. But, for all that, such intelligibility is still based entirely on the ordinary communicative competence of adult speakers, and is completely within the realm of communicative intentions and communicative understanding.

Yet, as Freud's penetrating analyses show, one can go a step further in the 'understanding' of jokes, by trying to ask the question of why do they cause such a remarkable release of energy as laughter. In so doing, one enters the domain of (unconscious) wishes, motives, etc., which operate independently of the (conscious, communicative) intentions of both listener and joke teller. In Silberstein's joke, for example, one could point out, at this 'deeper' level, that it has an anti-Semitic connotation. For it gives expression to the myth of Jewish domination of the world: powerful presidents and queens visit Israel, and an insignificant Jewish employee is seen to be above the highest authority of the Catholic church. Jews, on the other hand, would derive pleasure from the same joke by its very display of Jewish superiority. Of course, such general motivation would be complemented, in the case of specific tellers and listeners, by their personal associations and hidden motivations.

But this level of 'understanding' is of a completely different nature than the (communicative) understanding of what is sociopragmatically conveyed by the joke (see Chapter 9). The very fact that the 'joke-work' distorts and thereby hides the underlying motives shows that their recognition is not a requirement for the 'understanding' of the joke (at the communicative level). It is only through a further step in 'interpretation', namely, psychoanalytic interpretation, that some insight is gained into these deeper layers of significance of the joke. Hence, they cannot be properly said to be 'communicated' by the joke. Yet, these unconscious wishes and motives are fulfilled, through the joke, by means of what the joke is able to communicate. That is, their fulfillment is mediated by a process of communication and understanding at the linguistic level. One may say that the linguistic level is the *vehicle* through which the deeper wishes are expressed and fulfilled.

But this 'vehicle', when used in jokes, is not merely accessory. Freud

insists that the 'form' of the joke, its actual expression, is inseparable from the joke itself. When you 'reduce' a joke to its 'message', it is no longer a joke (Freud 1905: 17ff.). And the 'form' in question, of course, is mainly the joke's linguistic form. Furthermore, the actual work of constructing the joke consists precisely in synthesizing this form, in such a way as to produce the desired effect. The joke-work, therefore, uses language creatively: it actually produces a piece of speech (rather than reproducing a ready-made one, or recombining pieces of ready-made discourse — though this procedure can eventually also be used to produce the joke), with its appropriate communicative intention, to be recognized by the addressee. Freud stresses this creative aspect of the joke-work when he distinguishes between double meaning and displacement:

> In the case of double meaning a joke contains nothing other than a word capable of multiple interpretation, which allows the hearer to find the transition from one thought to another — a transition which, stretching a point, might be equated with a displacement. In the case of a displacement joke, however, the joke itself contains a train of thought in which a displacement of this kind has been accomplished. Here the displacement is part of the work which has created the joke; it is not part of the work necessary for understanding it (Freud 1905: 53-54).

Furthermore, the joke-work exploits creatively the sociopragmatic principles of language use that allow for the conveyance of indirect or implicit 'messages', by a variety of means. This too is only possible via the active participation of the audience, through the uptake and interpretation of the appropriate hints contained in the joke.[6]

Many authors have pointed out that 'ambiguity' (especially of language) is essential for jokes (e.g., Zijderveld 1983: 23).[7] In fact, it is not so much ambiguity — unless this term is understood in an excessively broad sense — but rather indirectness or implicitness that are essential features of language use in jokes. For it is via the indirectness devices that the joke lures the addressee into generating a reading of the story that is not explicitly conveyed (nor denied), and which will, at the end, be overthrown. The main sociopragmatic characteristic of the use of language in jokes, therefore, is their extensive and obligatory use of the set of indirectness devices.

One might conjecture that one further reason for the importance attributed by the joke-work to indirectness is that it may function, in a rather subtle way, as an additional 'displacement' device. The listener's and the speaker's full attention is required in order to certify that the appropriate indirect

interpretation of the story is construed (the speaker must make sure that the hints are grasped by the listener, which he does by observing his facial expression, gestures of assent, etc.). Consciousness, in this way, is kept busy, and the censorship's grip on the repressed wishes that cannot take the garden path to expression is somewhat loosened, paving the way to their unattended-to expression in the joke, and to their essential role in producing laughter.[8]

One could further point out that, if the above condition is indeed necessary for the production of laughter, then there are not really 'innocent' (i.e., 'non-tendentious') jokes. "The pleasure in a tendentious joke", says Freud (1950: 117), "arises from a purpose being satisfied whose satisfaction would otherwise not have taken place". Though the obstacle for the satisfaction of the purpose in questions may be external, "the removal of an internal obstacle (i.e., repression) may make an incomparably higher contribution to the pleasure" (116). Consider now that one major class of 'innocent' jokes, according to Freud, namely, "play upon words" (119), can in fact be interpreted as tendentious jokes of a particular kind, namely 'cynical' jokes, those which direct their aggressiveness against social institutions, moral norms of society, etc. (110). According to Freud (1905: 120n), pleasure derived from a 'good' as opposed to a bad play upon words comes from the recognition that what we expect(ed) as children proves correct. More specifically, when "the similarity between words is shown to be really accompanied by another, important similarity in their sense" (ibid). An example of this is '*Traduttore-traditore*'. In fact, what we find confirmed in this example is what Leibniz called 'the law of expression': in a 'good' language, similarities in form (sound) correspond to similarities in meaning (cf. Dascal 1978: 148-149 *et passim*). In other words, a 'good' language should not be arbitrary, merely conventional. Hence, pleasure is derived from discovering, in the appropriate joke, that the assumed arbitrariness of the linguistic sign is false. But this arbitrariness corresponds to the view of language as a social convention. Hence, the joke is anti-institutional, i.e., 'cynical'. The institution it criticizes implicitly is language itself. But, again, such an insight into what is the deep significance of a joke is the result of a kind of 'interpretation' achieved only by means of (psycho)analysis. It may be what underlies, ultimately, the pleasure derived from the joke, but neither teller nor audience must be aware of it in order to 'understand' (communicatively) the joke, and laugh at it.

II

In the case of dreams, according to Freud, unconscious wishes etc. are also responsible for the dream formation. They are in fact fulfilled in the dream. But they are fulfilled in, so to speak, an immediate way, by the mere fact of finding their way to being expressed in a dream. Such an expression need not be mediated by a process of communication and understanding. In dreams, there is no communication whatsoever, because there is no addressee. The only obstacle the fulfillment of the wish has to overcome is the internal barrier of repression. And this is done by the 'dream-work' with the help of the devices of displacement, condensation, etc.

Here too language occupies an important position, though not nearly as central as in jokes. Language, with its characteristic ambiguity and its huge network of associations provides ideal elements for achieving the distortion sought by the dream-work (Freud 1900: 340ff.). Dreams can take advantage of associative paths already set down by words, as well as by puns, jokes, etc. (345, 407-409, 518n.). As in jokes, the associations of ideas produced by dreams are "scorned by our normal thinking", since they are based on fortuitous phonic, homonymic, and other marginal linguistic links (596). Yet, unlike jokes, dreams "*are not made with the intention of being understood*" (341), and hence are not subject to sociopragmatic communicative constraints. The only 'interpretation' for dreams is psychoanalytic interpretation. The intermediate step of 'pragmatic interpretation' — absolutely indispensable in jokes — is totally irrelevant in dreams. This fact has far-reaching consequences, both for explaining the peculiarities of language use in dreams, and the differences between jokes and dreams in this respect. Not being used for communicative purposes, language can be manipulated in dreams much more freely than anywhere else. Dream 'utterances' need not be processed and recognized as such by an addressee.[9] Hence, they need not be regulated by syntactic, semantic, and sociopragmatic constraints. Linguistic material can, therefore, be treated by the dream-work just as *material*. The phonic and semantic aspects of language are freely interchanged and manipulated, disregarding the fact that the essence of language consists precisely in the systematic inter-relation of sound and meaning. Associations can be construed on a pure phonic basis; syntactic devices can be used for purposes that have nothing to do with their characteristic semantic function.[10]

Under these conditions, indirectness and implicitness, if they occur, need

not be built in such a way as to carry the appropriate hints for an addressee to understand them. Their only purpose, if at all, is that of providing a further means of escaping the censorship. And Freud might well go on providing, along with his examples of phonological, syntactic and semantic libertinage, examples of disregard for sociopragmatic constraints, in the 'dialogues' that occur in dreams.

The difference between dreams and jokes, in this respect, is sometimes described by Freud as if it were a matter of *degree* of compliance with the sociopragmatic constraints. Dreams enjoy great freedom vis-à-vis such constraints:

> The dream-work ... exaggerates this method of indirect interpretation beyond all bounds ... any sort of connection is good enough to serve as a substitute by allusion, and displacement is allowed from any element to any other (Freud 1905: 172).

The same techniques are used in jokes, "but when they appear, they usually respect the limits imposed on their employment in conscious thinking ..." (ibid.). Or, more explicitly:

> ... the dream-work operates by the same methods as jokes, but in its use of them it transgresses the limits that are respected by jokes (Freud 1905: 173).

And this difference can be traced back to the *social* character of jokes vs. the *asocial* character of dreams (cf. the passages quoted at the beginning of this paper), which determine the kind of use made of language in each case. In the former, the context being social, the function is communicative, whereas in the latter, the context is private, and the function purely 'mental'. But this change of context implies a *radical* change in the type of constraints on language use that are operative, and not a mere difference in *degree*. In one case, in spite of the appearance of freedom, sociopragmatic constraints are in full force. In the other, they are not. The question is whether other constraints or principles — this time psychopragmatic ones — are operative in language use in dreams.

The radical change in context and function explains not only the extreme degree of freedom of language use in dreams, but also another one of its fundamental characteristics, namely, its lack of creativity. Freud strongly stresses this property of speech in dreams:

> ... the dream-work cannot actually *create* speeches. However much speeches and conversations, whether reasonable or unreasonable in themselves, may figure in

> dreams, analysis invariably proves that all that the dream has done is to extract from the dream-thoughts fragments of speeches which have really been made or heard (Freud 1900:418).
>
> Where spoken sentences occur in dreams and are expressly distinguished as such from thoughts, it is an invariable rule that the words spoken in the dream are derived from spoken words remembered in the dream-material (Freud 1900:304).
>
> When anything in a dream has the character of direct speech, that is to say, when it is said or heard and not merely thought (and it is easy as a rule to make the distinction with certainty (*sic*)), then it is derived from something actually spoken in waking life — though, to be sure, this is merely treated as raw material and may be cut up and slightly altered and, more especially, divorced from its context (Freud 1900:183-184).

In spite of his insistence on this point, he never explains why it is so. Why cannot the dream-work actually create speech, though it can recombine speech, and create a wealth of neologisms and incongruous combinations of sentences and portions of sentences?

I think the answer is connected with the further assertion that he endeavors to substantiate — mostly by means of examples — that no 'higher' mental processes actually occur in the dream-work. Examples of such higher processes are 'calculations', which he discusses shortly before speeches (414ff.), as well as passing judgment, formulating criticism, expressing appreciation. Freud subsumes these under the phrase 'activities of the function of judgment'. Here is the passage where he excludes them from the dream-work:

> Everything that appears in dreams as the ostensible activity of the function of judgment is to be regarded not as an intellectual achievement of the dream-work but as belonging to the material of the dream-thoughts and as having been lifted from them into the manifest content of the dream as a ready-made structure.

And he adds:

> I can carry this assertion further. Even the judgment made after waking upon a dream that has been remembered, and the feelings called up in us by the reproduction of such a dream, form part, to a great extent, of the latent content of the dream and are to be included in its interpretation (Freud 1900:445).

The creativity of speech, much like the creativity of the other cognitive processes mentioned by Freud is, thus, excluded from the processes that constitute the dream-work, presumably on the same grounds. In so doing, Freud is certainly suggesting that normal, creative speech belongs in fact to the class of

the higher mental processes. Such an equation, to be sure, does not in itself explain why both speech and its fellow higher activities cannot be actually produced in the course of dream-work. But it ensures that, once we have found the answer to this question for the other higher activities, we will be entitled to apply the same answer to speech too.

Before we pursue this question, we should recall that there is a further characteristic of speech, not shared by the other higher mental processes, which might be also responsible for its exclusion from the dream-work. This is its communicative function that manifests itself primarily in the actual production of speech-acts which are appropriate to a given communicative situation. Since no 'communication' is involved in dreams, in the proper sense, there is no room for truly communicative acts such as speech production.[11] Notice that it is this characteristic of speech that excludes it not only from the dream-work, but also from any active role in the dream-thoughts themselves. For, as emphasized by Freud, in the dream-thoughts creative activities go on, just as in waking thought. Thus, referring to Tartini's *Trillo del Diavolo* sonata, allegedly dreamt by him, Freud claims that "the intellectual achievement is due to the same mental forces which produce every similar result during daytime" (Freud 1900: 612). Thus, the dream-thoughts do not bar creativity *per se*. However, they do bar communication, since they are not a social activity, but a strictly private one. Hence, the actual creation of speech is barred both from the dream-thoughts and from the dream-work. From the former, by virtue of its communicativity, and from the latter, by the joint effect of its communicativity and its creativity.[12]

Let us return now to the question of why all creative higher mental functions are not operative in the dream-work, according to Freud.

A first hint at an answer lies in the characteristics of the mechanisms that operate in the dream-work. Such mechanisms, it will be recalled, are four in number, and Freud insists that these are the only mechanisms involved (1900: 445): condensation, displacement, considerations of representability, and secondary revision. A summary look at these mechanisms would allow us to describe them immediately as 'transformational' mechanisms. They carry on 'transformations' of an input given to them, but they do not actually 'generate' anything of their own, in so doing. I deliberately employ the jargon of contemporary transformational grammar because the analogy is striking. In fact, in denying that judgment and other kinds of higher intellectual activity occur in the course of the dream-work, Freud is adopting the thesis of the

early days of transformational grammar, according to which *transformations do not change meaning*.[13] Such a thesis is equivalent to the claim that all the 'generative power' of the grammar lies at the level of the component that generates 'deep structures', the so-called 'base component' of the grammar.

The analogy between transformational grammar and Freud's dream-work has been noticed by a number of authors (e.g., Foulkes 1978; Edelson 1972), and it could be shown to extend to a considerable amount of detail. 'Condensation' and 'Displacement', for instance, are typical kinds of transformations found in any transformational grammar. For example, the symbols 'dream'+ PAST, appearing in a 'deep structure', are 'condensed' by a morpho-phonemic transformation that yields 'dreamed', in the corresponding 'surface structure'. And the structure 'John kicked the ball' may be transformed into the structure 'The ball was kicked by John' by a 'displacement' of its components (a kind of 'reshuffling' of them), by means of the transformation of 'passivization'. 'Considerations of representability' might correspond broadly to morpho-phonemic constraints due to the nature of the phonic medium. As for 'secondary revision', it might correspond, among other things, to the imposition of pragmatic constraints, which take into account the context, e.g., in terms of the conversational demands of the situation, of what can be assumed to be known by the addressee, and so on. But all we need here is to recall that, according to early generative grammar, none of these transformations contribute to the actual creation of a new complex unit of meaning. Such a creation is achieved at the level of deep structure, and what the transformations add to it are 'cosmetic' adaptations, which do not change the substance. If Freud had been familiar with this linguistic distinction, he would have had no difficulty in admitting (non-creative) grammatical transformations to be performed by the dream-work, just as he allowed for it to perform re-combinations of memorized speech and even the creation of neologisms. So, if an active sentence — but not its corresponding passive — was a part of the dream-thought or of the earlier experience of the dreamer, the fact that its corresponding passive appeared in the manifest content of the dream would not count as a counter-example to Freud's thesis that no speech is actually produced in dreams, since the dream-work would be allowed to perform the grammatical transformation of passivization, which is not 'generative' in itself.

In fact, once we start to press on for further precision in the statement of Freud's thesis, it becomes quite difficult to set the demarcating line between

'Speech creation' and 'recombination' of available materials clearly. After all, if you look at the cases of recombination illustrated by Freud, they appear to be remarkably free uses of linguistic material. Parts of different words and of different sentences melt, or are freely dissociated. In a structuralist view of language, this is exactly what 'producing speech' consists in. We have a 'stock' of words and of 'sentence types' at our disposal, and what we do when we speak is to draw pieces of these stocks and put them together. Only if one holds a transformational view does the distinction begin to make sense, for on this view different kinds of rules are responsible for 'generating' and for 'transforming' a structure.[14]

Assuming, then, that the dream-work is a transformational mechanism in the service of certain mental forces, and that it possesses the major characteristic of transformational mechanisms — namely, non-creativity — it remains to be seen what is it that this mechanism is allowed to do with linguistic material. It is important to observe that the transformational component of a grammar is bound to obey quite severe constraints. In particular, since the deep structure must be 'recovered' from the surface structure by a listener who tries to interpret the sentence, all grammatical transformations must be such as to leave, in the surface structure, appropriate 'traces' of the modifications they perform. Since recoverability is not a requirement imposed upon the dream-work, we can expect that the transformations it performs on linguistic (and other) material be much less constrained. And, in fact, as we have seen, they are characterized by their extreme freedom. Their only constraint seems to be the existence of some sort of associative link, no matter how arbitrary and fortuitous, that provides some path for the expression of a problematic content.

The psychopragmatic role of language in dreams is thus similar to its use for another cognitive purpose, namely, as a mnemonic device.[15] Yet, whereas a relatively stable and reliable connection sound/meaning is required for the satisfactory fulfillment of language's mnemonic function, not even this is required from its use in dreams. In fact, as a mnemonic aid, language is supposed to help *finding* the missing 'idea', whereas as a material for dream construction, it is supposed to help *hiding* the latent dream-thought. Hence, the less standard, stable, and predictable the associative link, the better it fulfils its job, in the latter case. The resulting psychopragmatic constraint displays therefore an inner tension similar to the one found in poetry: there must be some link, but it must not be too obvious. Otherwise, it will not fool the

censorship (in the case of poetry, the poem would lose its poetic force).

In a sense, this is similar to some extent to the necessity of using indirectness in jokes, where hints must be given to an indirectly conveyed (and wrong) interpretation, though they cannot be too evident, in order not to become explicit endorsements of that interpretation. But this superficial similarity should not lead us to overlook the profound differences between the two kinds of use of language, already noticed before: communicative vs. non-communicative; sociopragmatically constrained vs. psychopragmatically constrained; social vs. asocial; genuinely creative and generative vs. merely re-combinative or transformational; etc.

III

Why did Freud's thorough comparison between jokes and dreams overlook the most striking difference between the use of language in dreams and jokes, according to Freud's own account? In dreams — he claims — speech is not used in its characteristically 'creative' way; it is composed out of ready-made fragments. In jokes, on the other hand, it is highly creative.

I suspect that the reason for such an omission is that any explanation of this particular difference would (a) require spelling out his implicit and undeveloped views on the role of language in mental processes in general, and (b) pose serious difficulties for his 'topographic' view of the mind. I cannot pursue these suggestions fully here, and will restrict myself to a few speculations.

A possible explanation for the difference might run like this. In dreams, the creative job is performed by the unconscious, entirely. The whole dream-work is also an unconscious process. Only secondary revision is preconscious, but it is not considered to be really a part of the dream-work by Freud. Words, or language, have no constitutive part in the thought processes of the unconscious. These 'primary' processes are more primitive, looser, etc. They are not bound by linguistic conventions. Language, for these processes, is just another kind of material like any other available material. In this capacity, language is suitable because of its ambiguity, richness in associations, easiness of manipulation, etc. In jokes, on the other hand, language is used creatively because, in spite of its unconscious origins, the joke is in fact created by consciousness. And consciousness requires language, for it is "a sense-organ for the perception of psychical qualities"

(Freud 1900: 615), and "in order that thought-processes may acquire quality, they are associated in human beings with verbal memories, whose residues of quality are sufficient to draw the attention of consciousness to them and to endow the process of thinking with a new mobile cathexis from consciousness" (ibid: 617).[16] Dreams become ultimately conscious, and hence also require linguistic elements for endowing them with the necessary 'quality'. But they use language only minimally, for purposes of 'transformation', not of 'creation'. Jokes, however, making essential use of communicative intentions, must be actually *created*, in their complete linguistic form (from which they cannot be dissociated), within consciousness — the locus of communicative intentions. Hence their reliance upon language and their compliance with linguistic rules is much more thorough than that of dreams.

If this is correct, then it suggests that the boundaries between the different 'systems' of the mind, the *unconscious*, the *preconscious* and the *conscious*, are correlated with the extent to which language plays a role in each of them. At the same time, however, since language seems to play a role — albeit different — in all of them, such boundaries would appear to be less sharply marked than suggested by Freud, and would become a matter of degree: on one of the extremes, thought processes which are rule-governed, convergent, subject to linguistic constraints; on the other, thought processes that are not subject to 'rules' (though they may be subjected to causal laws, of course), that are divergent, and that escape linguistic constraints. But, if this is the case, then little room is left for viewing the mind as divided into different 'agencies'. It may well be that, foreseeing such implications, Freud refrained from pursuing further the issue of the difference in language use in jokes and in dreams.

Notes

1. For the difference between sociopragmatics and psychopragmatics, see Dascal 1983: 42-52; 1984.

2. In general, a communicative intention expressed by someone (A) who utters a sentence *x* can be roughly described as follows: '*A* intended the utterance of *x* to produce some effect in an audience by means of the recognition of the intention' (Grice 1967: 46). For further details and discussion see Chapter 1; Dascal 1983: 32 ff.; Searle 1981; Dascal and Gruengard 1981.

3. Notice that this fact explains the 'bi-sociation' effect, considered by Koestler (1964), for one, to be essential in jokes.

4. The precise analysis of the indirectness in the Silberstein joke — as well as in many others — would require (a) the distinction between indirectness and implicitness (cf. Dascal 1983: 130 ff.1), and (b) a discussion of the different perception — by the addressee — of the *character's* vs. the *joke-teller's* 'Speaker's meaning'. This latter issue is discussed in Dascal and Weizman (1990).

5. One might explain the comic effect in this case not so much in terms of 'bi-sociation', as suggested above, but in terms of Bergson's (1993) idea that the mechanization of life — as in Chaplin's characteristic movements — being a downgrading of it, produces laughter. In this case, understanding literally what ought to be understood indirectly indicates a downgraded, automatic performance on the part of the lady, with respect to which the listener, who is able to perceive the indirect meaning, feels superior.

6. The fact that the joke-work has to take notice of the audience's potential active participation is not an argument against the need to avoid confusing "the psychical processes involved in the *construction* of the joke (the 'joke-work') with the psychical processes involved in *taking in* the joke (the work of understanding)" (Freud 1905: 54).

7. For other linguistic devices capable of generating the "double meaning" necessary for a joke, see Fonagy's (1982) examples discussed in Chapter 26a.

8. According to Freud, the mere 'understanding' of a joke would cause only, say, 'intellectual' pleasure, and would at most produce a smile, not a burst of laughter. The latter can only be explained by the release of 'psychic energy' derived from the unleashing of repressed material.

9. As far as I know, Freud never employs the easy metaphor of 'communicating with oneself' in order to describe dreams. And for good reason, since no 'communication' whatsoever takes place in a dream. For a rejection of the same metaphor in connection with other cognitive uses of language, see Chomsky (1975: 61 ff.).

10. E.g., what is syntactically a sentential modifier may be used simply to indicate juxtaposition and association, rather than 'real' modification of what follows. Thus, in the dream that begins "Old Bruecke must have set me some task; strangely enough, it related to a dissection of the lower part of my own body...", the modifier *strangely enough* turns out, upon analysis, to refer not to the strangeness of the task (which would be its interpretation under normal syntactic/semantic rules), but to a situation in which Freud had offered a book to a woman, and described it as a strange book (Freud 1900: 452-454).

11. Notice that we are here speaking of the function of *speech*, not of *language* as such. Hobbes's notion of 'signifying', which can be achieved only by using propositions (either full or elliptical), and not by isolated words, is perhaps one of the first expressions of this important distinction. See Dascal (1980a) and Hacking (1975: 18 ff).

12. These two properties are not disconnected. As suggested above, every communicative use of language is in fact a creative act.

13. On the status of such a requirement in early transformational grammar, see Partee (1971).

14. Unfortunately — for the analogy we are here pursuing — recent developments in transformational grammar have tended to blur, or at least modify substantially, the distinction in question.

15. For an examination of the mnemonic function of language, as conceived in the 17th Century, see Dascal (1978: chapter 6).

16. Compare also: "…the Preconscious system needed to have qualities of its own which could attract consciousness; and it seems highly probable that it obtained them by linking the preconscious processes with the mnemonic system of indication of speech, a system not without quality" (Freud 1900: 574). Other indications about the constitutive role of language in mental processes are found in Freud's early monograph on aphasia (Freud 1891).

Chapter 17

Understanding art

At the end of a performance of contemporary dance, or of a concert of *avant-garde* music, or of a *théatre de l'absurde* play, or at an exhibition of abstract paintings, disapproval is often voiced by some people, on the grounds that they 'do not understand' the works of art they have been watching. Several reactions to this phenomenon, based on different conceptions of the 'aesthetic experience' are possible. Some theorists might simply point out that the question of 'understanding' is out of place here, since a work of art is to be *felt* rather than *understood*, i.e., what is relevant for reacting appropriately to art are our emotions rather than our cognitive abilities. This, they would argue, is true not only of these particular forms of art, but of art in general. In 'figurative' art, the true nature of the aesthetic experience is masked, and many people content themselves with an 'understanding' of the 'story' told by the play (picture, ballet, or symphony),[1] or with an assessment on the technical achievements of the performers. But in these cases, they do not reach the level of truly aesthetic evaluation, in so far as they do not let these works touch them emotionally. In the more abstract forms of art, in which no 'descriptive', story-like content is apparent, and in which sometimes the technique of the performers seems trivial, the lack of the proper aesthetic experience is suddenly felt by this kind of spectators, and they simply equate it with 'lack of understanding'. But in fact, these theorists would argue, the question is not really one of 'understanding'.

Others would claim that lack of understanding does indeed occur in such cases, and would assign it to a lack of knowledge of the intellectual background, aesthetic assumptions, purposes of the artist, and, in some cases, of the 'key' used by him — in short, lack of knowledge of the conceptual framework within which the work of art in question has been generated. Were the public better informed about these facts, it would be better off in its endeavor to understand those new forms of art, which break with the traditional 'rules of the game' in their fields. The required understanding is then, for them, a strictly cognitive achievement, to be accomplished through

the absorption of the required amount of information and its application to each particular case.

We believe that both these extreme positions — which perhaps nobody actually defends as such — are wrong. We are not satisfied with both the excessive intellectualism of the latter and the exclusive emotivism of the former. Even though it is true that a pure conceptual understanding of a work of art is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for its 'appropriate' aesthetic assessment, there is no reason to draw from this the conclusion that the understanding has nothing to do with such an assessment, thus adopting pure emotivism. There are *cognitive* abilities other than propositional knowledge or pure conceptual understanding, which are highly relevant in generating the 'appropriate' response to a work of art. In general, such abilities may be collected under the label 'knowing *how*', as opposed to 'knowing *that*'. The fact that the exercise of these abilities is required does not mean, however, that the emotive element is thereby excluded. On the contrary, it is precisely through the identification of the required cognitive abilities as forms of 'knowing how' rather than of 'knowing that', that emotive and cognitive components can be harmoniously combined in an account of what it is to 'understand' a work of art.

We think that the theoretical clarification of this issue has also significant practical consequences, both concerning guidelines for aesthetic education and for developing new forms of relationship between the members of the triad artist/work-of-art/spectator. But, as Nelson Goodman (1976: 265) puts it, "none of this talk or these trials (to devise and test means of ... fostering aesthetic abilities) can come to much without an adequate conceptual framework for designing crucial experiments and interpreting their results". The time has indeed come in this field "for the false truism and the plangent platitude to give way to the elementary experiment and the hesitant hypothesis" (ibid.). This is exactly what we purport to do: to put forward some hesitant hypotheses and to put them to trial through some elementary experiments.

One reason often mentioned in order to explain the "I don't understand" syndrome is lack of familiarity. The argument is that people who have not had previous acquaintance with these new forms of art nor with the 'ideology' underlying them, i.e., people who are not *familiar* in some way with what is going on in front of them, cannot indeed 'understand' it. But 'familiarity' is a misleading term. Certain forms of Japanese theatre or of Indian dance, for

example, may be totally new for someone who has no idea of the conventional meanings attached to the stylized gestures. And yet, she may aesthetically enjoy a spectacle in these styles, albeit confessing her failure to 'understand' it. *Prima facie*, cases like these seem to confirm the emotivist's claim to the effect that aesthetic pleasure has nothing to do with understanding. In a sense, this is no doubt hard to deny. But, on closer inspection, some doubts arise. For, what the lack of familiarity with the system of stylized gestures prevents is an understanding of the story conveyed. And we may agree that story-understanding is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for having an aesthetic experience, without thereby being committed to the further claim that no other form of understanding or cognitive factor is involved in such an experience. The grasping of the aesthetic impact of an unfamiliar type of performance may in fact be related to tacit cognitive factors, with which the spectator is deeply 'familiar', although she is not aware of them. An attempt to 'familiarize' the audience not with these tacit factors, but with the system of conventions used on stage, or with any other element leading to a better story-understanding of the performance, might not only prove useless for enhancing the audience's aesthetic experience, but even harmful for this purpose. For, it might lead the audience to concentrate on those aspects of the performance that are not truly aesthetic.

The conclusion, however, is not that all there is to do is to try to shape the 'taste' or the 'sensibility' of the prospective audiences of new or unusual forms of art. We believe, on the contrary, that knowledge — and not only sensibility or taste — is required for the aesthetic appreciation of art, and that audiences must be able to acquire such knowledge. In this sense, there is no doubt that art can only be 'understood' and even 'enjoyed' with the help of previous knowledge. The question, of course, is what kind of knowledge is most relevant to the understanding of art. And such a question is of no lesser magnitude than its Siamese twin, namely one of the most traditional and fundamental questions of aesthetics: "what is it to understand art?".

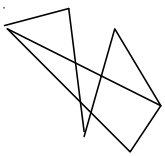
Clearly, this is the point at which we should make clear that we do not claim to be able to solve here a problem to which centuries of reflection have been devoted. In the same way as understanding an utterance in the most ordinary conversation requires the perception and interpretation of its many layers of significance, as well as of the complex interplay between them,[2] the understanding of a work of art is likely to be a multi-layered, highly complex process, involving cognitive, emotive and other factors. We are not in a

position to offer a theory that accounts for the full complexity of this process. In particular, it should be clear that, by stressing the role of the cognitive element, we do not intend to deny the importance of the other factors involved. Nor do we purport to imply that the particular cognitive factor we concentrate upon — namely, 'knowing how' — excludes or is incompatible with other cognitive factors. Yet, we think that such a factor has been widely neglected and that its consideration may shed some light on people's reactions to new forms of art.

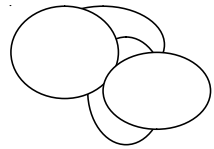
Let us begin by pursuing a little further the suggestion that lack of 'familiarity' is a major reason for lack of understanding of a new or unusual form of art. We suggest that the feeling of lack of familiarity derives, at least in part, from the inability to recognize significant 'patterns' in what one sees or hears. To a large extent, indeed, creating and understanding art is generating and recognizing regular patterns. These are common to various art forms. Rhythm, for instance, although essentially a kind of pattern due to the structuration of time, can be recognized also in the plastic arts. The same is true for symmetry and all other types of relations, which constitute what is known by the name of 'composition'.

Now, there is no doubt that we have the ability to identify patterns within the stream of otherwise undifferentiated stimuli that bombard our senses. In fact, our most important cognitive abilities seem to be based upon the availability of some sort of 'natural' way of organizing our experience in terms of regular patterns.[3] Furthermore, there seem to be inbuilt mechanisms for establishing correspondences amongst the data coming from the different senses. Subjects who were confronted with two irregular forms (A and B) and two meaningless words ("Ooboo" and "Itratzky"), which were described as the names of these forms in a remote language, invariably associated "Ooboo" with A and "Itratzky" with B (von Foerster 1966: 54):

B



A



The same ability to establish correspondences between different sensory domains seems to underlie the more explicit transfer of predicates from one domain to the other. We speak of a piece of music as being colorful or

bright, we claim that a painting is full or rhythm and that the colors used in it are not dissonant; we apply in dance, in music and in the plastic arts the adjectives 'light', 'heavy', 'smooth'; and so on. To be sure, one might argue that these are all metaphoric uses of such terms and conclude that the above facts do not prove the existence of any common source to all sensory modes. But, unless one is willing to extend the term 'metaphor' to cover not only verbal descriptions but also imagery, the evidence for the existence of genuine synaesthetic phenomena — i.e., the arousal of imagery pertaining to one sensory mode by perception in another mode — is beyond reasonable doubt.[4] One does not have to go all the way with the classical philosophers who postulated the existence of a sixth, 'common' sense, in order to account, among other things, for facts such as these,[5] but there is no point in denying the existence of mechanisms which establish, at the perceptual level at least, inter-sensory correspondences.

The emphasis, by some authors, on the independence of the senses might be associated with a desire to preserve the independence of the forms of art vis-à-vis each other. Dance, in particular, has been often considered as subordinated to other forms of art (notably to music and theatre). By stressing its plastic, visual character, Jean George Noverre, for one, was denying such a subordination.[6] But his suggestion of a common underlying source for both dance and painting might still be somehow dangerous for someone who, like S. Langer, wishes to characterize dance as a 'symbolic form of feeling' on its own right, neither derivative nor secondary with respect to other modes of feeling.[7] Yet, the recognition of the existence of common elements to the various sensory modes does not imply a denial of their differences and independence. Furthermore, as far as dance and movement are concerned, it may well turn out that the emphasis upon these common elements and the investigation of their sources may prove, after all, rewarding. For, the body and its movements are likely to be, ultimately, the basis for all forms of perception of the world and for all modes of self-expression.[8]

Whatever the precise degree of inter-sensoriness of our natural ability for pattern recognition — and it is immaterial for our argument whether the naturalness in question is innate or derives from very early learning — there is no doubt that it provides a 'familiar' basis upon which all of us can build at least a rudimentary form of 'understanding', which is independent of formal learning and of awareness of any specific system of symbolization. But of course this is not enough. For we certainly build upon this natural basis the

ability to recognize other patterns, some of which become conventionally institutionalized. Sometimes these new patterns may even supersede the natural ones, which are somehow set aside. Furthermore, we elaborate special ways of combining such patterns, and this may develop into fairly sophisticated systems of rules that govern their combinations. The use of these systems, in turn, may become regulated by norms of conduct that specify what use should be made of them and what is the 'appropriate' approach to any given use. Such systems of norms evolve into what is sometimes called a 'tradition'. Understanding is related to these various levels, and is certainly not just a matter of recognizing the natural patterns underlying the ongoing experience. It requires 'familiarity' with the institutionalized patterns, with the system of rules and with the tradition according to which the work of art is organized. Lack of familiarity with any of these elements, all of which are learned (albeit tacitly), may be thus responsible for the "I don't understand" syndrome. Let us consider more closely these factors and, in particular, the nature of the knowledge of them we use in our understanding of art.

When a work of art is created, no doubt it must contain something new, original and perhaps even surprising. But its novelty lies more in the exploration of the existing stock of familiar patterns, following the accepted system of rules, than in the creation of radically new and hitherto totally unknown patterns and rules. The novelty manifests itself in unexpected combinations, in the application of patterns and rules to new types of elements, and even in mild violations of the rules. This 'normal' creativity, to be found in current works of art, is rather like the rule-governed creativity displayed by every speaker of a language, who utters daily scores of *new* sentences of his language. These are new in the sense that they are combinations of existing words, which neither the speaker in question nor probably any other speaker has ever uttered or heard before. Nevertheless, his utterances are easily understood, because their building blocks and the system of rules according to which they are put together are left substantially untouched by the novelty of the sentences generated.

But there can be another type of novelty, much more radical: it is the one involved in the creation not of a new work of art within a well established form of art, but in the creation of a new *form* of art. That is to say, a new type of patterns, a new system of rules, radically different from the familiar, extant ones. In this case, the audience is at a loss. To pursue the linguistic parallel, the situation is similar to the case in which someone would use the words of his

language with different senses, or, say, of someone who tries to apply the system of syntactic rules of Finnish to Hebrew. In such cases, there is a more radical lack of understanding, derived from a total absence of familiarity with the new patterns and rules at work. It is a whole new system that has to be learned, in order to enable one to interpret and evaluate the work of art with which one is confronted: reliance on the old system not only will not do, but may even lead to outright rejection of the novelties presented.

Such a radical departure from the established system may be compared to what happens when a branch of science suffers the kind of radical change that Kuhn (1962) has called a 'scientific revolution'. When such a thing occurs, Kuhn argues, the 'paradigm' that governs the practice of scientists within that branch of science in the previous period of 'normal' science, is replaced by a radically different 'paradigm', which will regulate the next period of 'normal' science. Such paradigms define, for Kuhn, what counts as a 'fact', a 'problem', a 'solution', a 'relevant experiment', in short, most of the relevant patterns and rules that govern scientific practice. Kuhn goes as far as claiming that the different paradigms are 'incommensurable' with each other. He also claims that a paradigm is essentially 'implicit' both in the way it is learned and in the way it influences the scientist's conduct of inquiry. Without going that far, it seems that some of these features are shared by the creation of a new form of art: such a creation carries with it a new definition of what counts as a 'work of art' (in the domain considered), as well as new concepts of 'problem' and 'solution', and new standards of criticism. Maybe such a new system is not entirely unrelated to earlier ones, but certainly reliance upon the latter is utterly unhelpful if one tries to understand works produced within the former.

Other conceptual tools, perhaps more akin to the aesthetician's concerns than the concepts of linguistics or of the philosophy of science, might help to clarify further this point — Wittgenstein's concepts of 'language game' and 'form of life', for example. For Wittgenstein, in his later works (e.g., 1958), language cannot be defined in terms of a monolithic and fixed general system of rules. On the contrary, each one of its many uses has its own set of rules, which define it as a particular 'language game'. The shift from one use of language to another requires the shift from one set of rules to another, and failure to recognize this fact is perhaps the most widespread cause of misunderstanding and lack of communication. Similarly, one might think of each form of art as a different '(language) game', and of the creation of a new form of art — as the creation of a new, different game, with rules that have to be

mastered through practice. Of course, the rules of a language game can be formalized and made explicit — but only within another language game (a 'meta-game'), with its own rules. A 'form of life', on the other hand, is a much more encompassing and, thus, both more vague and more deeply 'implicit' thing than a language-game. Its 'rules' govern a wide range of human activities and, apparently, are inherently not liable to formalization, since their formalization would require one to step out of the very form of life one is trying to formalize. It is thus unlikely that a new form of art could be profitably comparable to a new form of life. Even Wollheim's (1970: 120ff.) suggestion that art as a whole is a form of life, although apparently more plausible than the former suggestion, is problematic. For it would imply, if one adheres to Wittgenstein's remarks, that an artist would be in fact unable to communicate with a non-artist, whose form of life is not art. But let us leave this question aside for a moment.

Let the new system of rules and patterns responsible for the novelty of a new form of art be described as a new 'game', a new 'paradigm', a new 'form of life' or a new 'language'. The question is what kind of knowledge is involved in the mastery of such a system, and how does such knowledge contribute its share for the understanding of a work of art produced under its constraints.

The various descriptions we gave of what has to be learned already indicate the kind of answer we are aiming at. A child has learned the grammar of his mother tongue long before it receives formal grammar lessons at school. The child has learned them by being exposed to the language spoken around it, by making the relevant abstractions and generalizations from the utterances it hears, and mainly by testing its own generalizations through the production of new utterances and the observation of the reactions of other speakers to them. Even a grown-up who learns a second language is required to practice the new set of rules, rather than just to memorize it, if he wishes to become a proficient speaker of the language. Similarly, Wittgenstein insists that a language game cannot be learned by definition or description, but only by actually getting involved in it, by *using* its rules. This is also the case, *a fortiori*, for a form of life. And the new rules and procedures of a scientific paradigm, according to Kuhn, are necessarily implicit. They must be inculcated in the young apprentice, through exemplification and practice, rather than explicitly expounded to him.

Whereas the *essential* tacit character of the knowledge of rules and conventional patterns may be questioned (after all, the rules can be explicitly

formulated and formally taught, although this is not usually done), there is another kind of knowledge involved in which the essential implicitness can hardly be questioned. We could perhaps describe it in terms of the notion of 'form of life'. But the notion of 'tradition' to which we alluded earlier may be better for this purpose. Once more, the analogy with language may be helpful. The system of rules that constitutes the language specifies, among other things, which expressions are well-formed and which are not. It thus specifies what are the expressions of the language that can be legitimately (= correctly) used. But the system as such does not specify for what purposes such well-formed expressions should be used. For example, it is not incompatible with the rules of the system to use language in order to lie. Yet, as Popper has pointed out (1969: 135), if everybody were to use language mainly to convey false descriptions, language would become unable to fulfill its descriptive function. What prevents this is the existence of a 'tradition' which prescribes that, unless forced by special circumstances, it is one's duty to use language as a vehicle of truth.[9] Now, a language can be compared to an 'institution', in the sense that it consists in a definite system of rules or regulations, which can be used for various purposes. But without a tradition that imposes some guidelines and constraints for its use, no institution can in fact function. Imagine what would happen to many of our best institutions if the tradition that regulates the taking of turns (in conversation, in the lines as bus-stops or bank counters, etc.) suddenly disappeared. Yet, such a tradition is neither a part of the institutions themselves (language, public transportation, banking, etc.) nor an institution on its own: in so far as it regulates the *uses* of institutions, it cannot be one of them, or else it would require a further tradition to regulate its own use. In this, traditions, like forms of life, seem to be essentially presupposed and implicit in all forms of human activity.

As in the case of language, one can say that, *pace* Kuhn, there is a tradition of 'science making' (very close perhaps to what Popper calls the 'critical tradition'), which underlies various paradigms and remains unchanged when the latter do change through scientific revolutions. Moreover, such a tradition must have been an *innovation* at some time and place (the fifth century B.C. in Greece? The seventeenth century in Western Europe?), since one does not find it or its equivalent in other cultures or in our own culture at a prior time.

Innovations in art may sometimes be of such a revolutionary character that they imply the adoption of something very close to a new tradition. The passage from figurative to non-figurative art, for example, may imply a shift at

such a deep level. Classical ballet, for example, is usually taken to be a 'figurative' art, in the sense that particular sequences of movements are interpreted as representing certain emotions, and the ballet as a whole involves some sort of plot. Yet, we suggest that this may be more a matter of tradition than just of the system's rules, which constitute this particular form of art. Such a tradition, which is comparable to the above mentioned norm that requires one not to lie (too often), directs the attention of the spectator to the analogies between certain stylized movements and the natural expression of certain feelings, and relies upon the 'etymology' of some of these movements (which originated, for instance, in gestures of courtship). But the system has, in fact, a 'syntax' of its own, which can be used independently of the kind of interpretation (i.e., of the 'semantics') just mentioned, provided one is willing to abandon the tradition of figurative interpretation.[10] It is through a shift of this kind that much of classical ballet's repertoire of movements can be incorporated into the abstract productions of modern dance companies.

Whether the novelty of a work of art lies in its new use of old patterns and rules, or in its generation of a new system of patterns and rules, or in its introduction of a new tradition, it is clear that the kind of knowledge that its understanding requires is not 'theoretical' or 'propositional' knowledge. It seems to us that a distinction introduced by G. Ryle (1949) will be useful in order to capture the gist of what we have been trying to say.

The distinction we have in mind is that between 'knowing how' and 'knowing that'. Let us recall its essentials.[11] Ryle's concern is to show that, when a person or her behavior is (justly) described as 'intelligent', the description need not be understood as imputing to the person the knowledge of this or that particular set of truths. This does not mean, however, that the notion of knowledge has nothing to do with such a description. What is imputed to the person is another kind of knowledge, not 'theoretical' or 'propositional' (expressed in the form "S knows that so-and-so"), but, say, 'practical': the person is able *to do* certain things, she knows *how* to do this-and-that, she has a certain *competence* rather than some specified repertoire of truths. Examples in which this kind of knowledge is displayed are "knowing how to make and appreciate jokes, to talk grammatically, to play chess, to fish and to argue" (Ryle 1949: 29). In all these cases, the ascription of 'know how' to a person amounts to saying not only that her performances "come up to certain standards or satisfy certain criteria", but also that she is in fact *applying* these criteria *critically*, i.e., that she is "ready to detect and correct her lapses, to

repeat and improve upon successes, to profit from the examples and so forth" (ibid.). This description of what is at stake in knowing how might in fact be used by Ryle's adversaries[12] in order to show that knowing how boils down, ultimately, to knowing that. For, they might argue, the person's application of criteria or observance of rules in her intelligent performance presupposes her acknowledgement of these rules or criteria, i.e., presupposes her knowledge that the criteria or rules are such-and-such. Ryle's reply to this argument involves two main points. First, he recalls that there are many kinds of intelligent performance, for which neither the performer nor perhaps anyone else is able to formulate the relevant criteria or rules. The making and appreciation of jokes is one example (see, however, Chapter 16). Correct reasoning is another: it existed long before Aristotle first formulated its canons. In general, Ryle concludes, "efficient practice precedes the theory of it; methodologies presuppose the application of the methods, of the critical investigation of which they are the products" (31). In this class of examples, Ryle includes also *aesthetic taste*, as well as tactful manners and inventive technique.

But, according to Ryle, there is a stronger objection to the intellectualist's attempt to reduce knowing how to knowing that, namely the fact that this would lead us straight into an infinite regress:

> The crucial objection to the intellectualist legend is this. The consideration of propositions is itself an operation the execution of which can be more or less intelligent, less or more stupid. But if, for any operation to be intelligently executed, a prior theoretical operation had first to be performed and performed intelligently, it would be a logical impossibility for anyone ever to break into the circle (Ryle 1949: 31).

Such a regress arises, among other cases, if one tries to apply the intellectualist account to the application of rules, maxims, canons, etc. For, such an application requires the ability not only to know the rule, but also to recognize a situation as being of the type that warrants the application of the rule. But the rule "cannot embody specifications to fit every detail of the particular state of affairs" (32). One must, then, be able to discern relevant from irrelevant features of the situation, i.e., one must have at least the know-how required for such a discrimination. Clearly: if one wanted to speak of a meta-rule which specifies the relevance requirements for the application of the rule, the same problem would arise with the application of this meta-rule, as well as with that of a meta-meta-rule and so forth. Ryle thus concludes that "'intelligent' cannot be defined in terms of 'intellectual' or 'knowing how' in terms of 'knowing that'" (32).

Ryle's ideas so far can be straightforwardly applied to the case of understanding art, in the light of our previous considerations. Understanding art is no doubt a form of *intelligent* behavior. It is intelligent, moreover, in the specific sense of involving some sort of knowledge. But, as we have seen, at least an important part of such knowledge is not of the usual, 'theoretical' kind. It is rather 'tacit' or 'implicit'. In Ryle's terms, it is a form of 'knowing how' rather than of 'knowing that'. We do not have to go all the way with Ryle and accept his claim that knowing how is essentially irreducible to knowing that.[13] It may turn out that, upon a careful philosophical analysis, one is forced to conclude that "all knowing how is knowing that" (Brown 1970: 242). For us, this is immaterial. For, all we claim is that the various kinds of knowledge, whose indispensability for the understanding of art has been pointed out previously, are at least 'substantially' forms of knowing how. We may even say that the extent to which these forms of knowledge are 'tacit' is a question of degree. The more their tacitness is 'substantial', the more difficult it is to produce the relevant analysis showing how they are in fact reducible to knowing that. Thus, whereas the systems of rules and patterns to which we alluded may perhaps be rendered explicit with a moderate amount of effort, the traditions we mentioned are much harder to be reduced to sets of propositions, which are able to capture them fully. The latter are perhaps good candidates for the irreducibility claimed by Ryle. But the fact is that such analyses or attempted reductions are always *a posteriori*, products of the philosopher's endeavor. They do not seem to be operative in the actual behavior of simple spectators of a performance, or even in the behavior of the artists who produce the performance.

Therefore, the application of Ryle's distinction in an account of what is at stake in understanding art does not require the acceptance of his anti-reductionistic stand. This is also true with respect to the main practical implications he draws from his account, namely those concerning the best way of imparting and acquiring the relevant know how:

> Consider first a boy learning to play chess ... the boy now begins to learn the game properly, and this generally involves his receiving explicit instruction in the rules. He probably gets them by heart and is then ready to cite them on demand. During his first few games he probably has to go over the rules aloud or in his head, and to ask now and then how they should be applied to this or that particular situation. But very soon he comes to observe the rules without thinking of them... It has become second nature to him to do what is allowed and to avoid what is forbidden ... But it would be quite possible for a boy to learn chess

> without even hearing or reading the rules at all. By watching the moves made by others and by noticing which of his own moves were conceded and which were rejected, he could pick up the art of playing correctly. ... We learn *how* by practice, schooled indeed by criticism and example, but often quite unaided by any lessons in the theory (40-41).

All this can be applied, *mutatis mutandis*, to the skills required in understanding art. We would like to stress particularly the suggestion that it is *practical* rather than *theoretical* instruction that is mostly relevant and efficient for the acquisition of such skills, for it is mainly this claim that our experiment tries to put to test.

Criticisms of Ryle's distinction do not affect the application we are envisaging. D. G. Brown, who, as we pointed out, rejects Ryle's radical distinction between knowing how and knowing that, acknowledges that "Ryle has brought to light important differences between ... two main kinds of knowledge" (Brown 1970: 242). Although, for Brown, both are kinds of knowing that, one of them, which he labels 'practical knowledge' has as its essential feature a very intimate connection with action: it is the knowledge that some kind of action is to be done. As a consequence, such a knowledge is primarily displayed by the knower's performance rather than by his ability to formulate it verbally: "the knower need not be able to say what he knows but exhibits his knowledge in performance" (247-248). As Ryle's young chess player, he "is not said to know how to play if all he can do is to recite the rules accurately. ... But he is said to know how to play if, although he cannot cite the rules, he normally does make the permitted moves, avoid the forbidden moves and protest if his opponent makes forbidden moves. His knowledge how is exercised primarily in the moves that he makes, or concedes, and in the moves that he avoids or vetoes" (Ryle 1949: 41).[14]

While it is clear that, under the descriptions given above, some of the cognitive capacities involved in understanding art are of the 'knowing how' type, this is not so obvious if we return to our previous consideration of patterns. Patterns indeed are fairly abstract entities, apparently of a conceptual nature. They might be thought to be learnable by means of elaborate descriptions or definitions. It is to this apparent conceptual nature of patterns that we turn now our attention. Consider what is probably the most 'conceptual' or abstract type of pattern, namely the logical form of an argument. The argument

(A) Either John is a candidate for public office or he has just won an election: he has not won an election; therefore he is a candidate for public office.

has the same logical form as the argument

(B) This solution contains either chrome or copper; it does not contain copper; hence it contains chrome.

Both arguments share an abstract structure, a logical pattern. We are certainly able to recognize this kind of similarity between A and B. We can also — and that is what symbolic logic is all about — represent the common pattern by means of symbols;

(C) p v q; ~q; therefore p.

But if we are asked to *define* or *describe* the logical form in question, the best we can do is to point to C or to another symbolic representation of the same form and say: "this is the logical form of arguments A and B". In other words, we are able to *show* the form but not to describe it. And the symbolic representation, as a matter of fact, is not substantially different, except for that purpose, from any of the instances of the argument, since we might as well take A or B as the paradigm-case to which we point in order to explain what is its form. The only privilege of the symbolic instance is that it presents the form in its nudity, so to speak, stripped of all content which is irrelevant to the identification of the pattern.

What has been said of logical form is also true of mathematical form, as well as of other mathematical entities. What is the number seven, for example? Is it 2 + 5, or 10 – 3, or 111 (in binary notation), or any other form of expressing it — including '7' itself? The number seven is certainly none of these, for it is that abstract entity which is shown or displayed or expressed by all these equivalent expressions, and by the sets of relations it has with other entities of the same kind. To be sure, some definition can be given of such an entity (Peano's or Rusell's, for example), but such a definition is the result of a much higher kind of abstraction, and plays no role in the acquaintance each of us has with numbers.

In a very basic sense, in order to become acquainted with these entities, one must be presented with instances rather than with conceptual characterizations of them. And one must learn to operate with them rather than merely contemplate them in order to attain understanding of such entities. Further-

more, it is the discovery of the multiplicity of ways in which the same form may be expressed that yields a better understanding of it.

If this is the case with mathematical and logical patterns, it is *a fortiori* true of the patterns that must be recognized for the understanding of art. With one important difference; whereas logical and mathematical form can be introduced by means of abstract conceptual definitions, i.e., by the formulation of precise criteria of identification, it seems to us that artistic patterns tenaciously — and significantly — resist this kind of procedure. There is, notoriously, no agreement on what are the criteria involved in the recognition of works of art. In so far as they are proposed, such criteria are always irremediably vague and sometimes ambiguous. Using the useful Leibnizian classification of types of knowledge, one might say that the knowledge we have of artistic patterns (and perhaps of the other factors which determine our understanding of art as well) is *clear but not distinct*. According to Leibniz, "knowledge is *clear* when it makes it possible for me to recognize the thing represented" (as opposed to 'obscure' knowledge in which such a recognition is not possible). Clear knowledge may be distinct or confused. "It is *confused* when I cannot enumerate one by one the marks which are sufficient to distinguish the thing from others", i.e., when I am unable to give a definition — not necessarily the best possible one — of the thing. Among the things of which we have normally only clear but confused knowledge, Leibniz mentions "colors, odors, flavors and other particular objects of the senses" which we know "clearly enough and discern from each other but only by the simple evidence of the senses and not by marks that can be expressed". And his final example of this kind of knowledge is directly relevant to our subject:[15]

> Likewise we sometimes see painters and other artists correctly judge what has been done well or done badly; yet they are often unable to give a reason for their judgment but tell the inquirer that the work which displeases them lacks 'something, I know not what'.

The ability involved in clear but not distinct knowledge is obviously of a cognitive nature, but it is more practical than theoretical, more a knowing how than a knowing that. Its acquisition is only possible through the exposure to instances, exercises in recognition, actual use. There is no conceptual shortcut that leads to its mastery. Certainly this does not mean that art theoreticians should not try to acquire distinct knowledge of what is involved in understanding art. But such a knowledge, even if attainable, is not likely to become a substitute for the acquaintance that has to be laboriously acquired

by direct practice, any more than the theory of color helps someone, in daily life, to distinguish red from green.

Let us consider now some of the theoretical and practical implications of our proposal. As far as aesthetic theory is concerned, our hypothesis is, for the most part, neutral with respect to many ongoing controversies. Since knowing how is to be found not only in the aesthetic domain, but also in many other domains of human activity (science, language, everyday life), there can be no temptation to see in it a (or *the*) distinctive characteristic of the 'aesthetic experience' or of 'aesthetic appreciation'. To be sure, our hypothesis is not *entirely* neutral. For it implies a rejection of pure hedonism and other forms of emotivism, by stressing the need for a cognitive element in aesthetic experience and appreciation. In this, our point of view is within the tendency "to give greater weight of attention to the cognitive than to the hedonic aspects of aesthetic experience" (Osborne 1972: 14). On the other hand, we do not preclude the possibility that the know-how required for understanding art is in fact intimately associated with emotive elements, in one way or another, as suggested both by Collingwood (1958) and Goodman (1976). Furthermore, by stressing the fact that the cognitive element in aesthetic experience and appreciation is substantially of the knowing how type, and operates at several different levels (natural patterns, institutionalized patterns, rules, traditions), our hypothesis accommodates both the views of those who emphasize the higher sophisticated cognitive tools required for our "appreciative commerce with the great works of art" (Osborne 1970: 56), and of those who admit that even an unskilled child does in fact "indulge in aesthetic activity when it recognizes its mother's smile" (Hungerland, quoted by Osborne 1972: 8). For, in both cases what is at stake is a cognitive know how, albeit of a different level: the child's aesthetic activity relies only upon its stock of natural patterns, whereas the sophisticated spectator's appreciation relies on a know how involving the full range of natural and institutionalized patterns, rules and traditions. To be sure, such an appreciation may be described alternatively as an "expansion of awareness for its own sake" (Osborne), as a "cognitive functioning of emotions" (Goodman), as "making emotions cognitively clear" (Collingwood), or as an exercise in interpretation based on one's mastery of the relevant 'language of feelings' or 'symbolic form' (Langer). It may also be characterized as having to do mainly with the spectator's ability to recognize the artist's intention and, as it were, to reproduce in himself the artist's creative activity.[16] But whatever cognitive factor is picked up as the dominant

one, it is likely to be present in the aesthetic experience and appreciation as a know how rather than as propositional knowledge. Even if one speaks of 'expansion of awareness', this is likely to be achieved only by a subject who is unaware of the factors that yield such an expansion.

On the practical level, if the kind of knowing which is relevant to understanding and enjoying art is so intimately associated with doing, it is clear that prospective audiences of new, as well as old forms of art must be given the opportunity to do, to manipulate, to operate, in short to *participate* in what they are supposed later to understand and enjoy.[17] If it is true, moreover, that the relevant kinds of patterns in art understanding are not exclusive to a single *medium*, but common to many *media*, and that their perception under different clothes yields a better grasping and mastery of them, then multi-media artistic education is to be favoured.[18]

An experiment was conducted in order to test some of the hypotheses formulated above. We will describe here, very briefly, the procedure, and give a summary of the results. The subjects, who volunteered to participate in an "experiment in aesthetics: on the 'understanding' of a movement performance", were divided in three groups: a) those who received a theoretical lecture on movement and dance; b) those who received practical instruction in movement; c) those who did not receive any preparatory guidance. The members of the three groups then attended a performance consisting of three parts: A) A life performance by a couple, displaying the abstract movement features of shape, time, space and energy, accompanied by percussion sounds; B) A life performance of expressive movement, involving at first three dancers who might be eventually recognized as the "main character", his "mirror image" and his "shadow"; this culminates when the link between the three is broken and they become independent figures, joined by two other dancers to form a final group composition; the musical accompaniment comprised selections of Mussorgsky's "Pictures at an Exhibition"; C) Norman McLaren's film "Ballet Adagio" (1971) in which a couple of dancers performs an excerpt of A. Messerer's ballet "Spring Water" filmed in slow motion, accompanied by the sounds of Albinoni's "Adagio". At the end of these presentations, subjects replied to a questionnaire.

Roughly, the questionnaire had two parts. The first was intended to determine the kinds of 'knowledge' the subject had or lacked, which might be closely or remotely connected with the 'understanding' of the presentations they attended to. The second was designed in order to give an estimate of the

'understanding' the subjects had of the performances, as well as of other parameters referring to their reaction, such as emotive involvement, acceptance or rejection, etc. Most of the questions allowed for differential responses to parts A, B and C of the presentation.

Out of the 44 subjects that returned the questionnaires, 12 had participated in the practical session, 15 in the theoretical lecture, and 17 had no preparatory guidance preceding the presentations. This information, together with information concerning each subject's background in art (in general) and movement/dance (in particular), allowed us to differentiate the subjects in terms of the kind of knowledge (of movement) they had: those with 'pure know-how', 'pure know-that', 'neither know-how nor know-that', 'more know-how than know-that', and 'more know-that than know-how'. The difficulties involved in analyzing the data to produce such a classification raised a number of interesting and important questions.

The second part of the questionnaire contained, besides a direct question ("Did you understand the performance (A, B, C)?") some indirect ones, by means of which the kind of understanding (e.g., in terms of plot, characters, patterns, etc.) and other responses (e.g., emotive involvement, curiosity, approval, disapproval, etc.) could be elicited. Correlations of these with the types of knowledge disclosed in the first part were computed for each of the three presentations (A, B, C), which ranged clearly from the more abstract to the less abstract, and from the less traditional and familiar, to the more traditional and conventional. The details of these correlations are perhaps more enlightening than the overall results. All we can present here, however, is a brief summary of the main conclusions. The experiment, which can hardly be considered conclusive, gives support to the following hypotheses: 1. An abstract performance is harder to 'understand' than a more expressive or a more conventional one. It is also harder to enjoy. 2. Understanding and enjoying a presentation involve both cognitive and emotive responses, which interact in hitherto unsuspected ways. 3. The subjects' perception of their own understanding is based on traditional factors such as the identification of a plot, a character or a theme. Subjects are not aware, in general, of the role of pattern detection in their understanding and enjoyment of a performance. 4. Practical instruction and, in general, a background including know-how, was most effective in: a. improving pattern detection; b. increasing the emotive response to the performance; c. yielding understanding of the most abstract perfor-

mance, which was generally neither understood nor enjoyed by subjects without such a background.

Admittedly, our approach is fairly naïve, and the pilot study we have conducted is problematic in many respects: the subjects' own reports, as recorded in questionnaires, are the primary data; the group as a whole cannot be considered to be a random sample of the population (the subjects were, for the most part, philosophy students); sophisticated statistical tests of significance were not, as yet, applied to the interpretation of the results; etc. Nevertheless, we cannot accept Findlay's (1972: 92) outright rejection of an empirical approach to aesthetics, such as the one we attempted to implement:

> If quasi-empirical approaches in aesthetics are inadequate, overtly empirical approaches are much more inadequate. And here I rank all psychological and sociological treatments which base themselves on observation, experiment or history.

It is only when such treatments purport to offer a 'scientific' or 'objective' set of aesthetic values that they seem to fit Findlay's description of the 'root inadequacy' of empirical approaches in general, namely, "their total inability to account for the normative, the cogent, the impersonal, the authoritative character of aesthetic values, their claim to rise above mere liking, mere custom, mere arbitrary selection" (ibid.). But, needless to say, in our case we have no intention to claim normative status to our findings. We are just trying to find out — if possible — what type of knowledge is involved in the understanding of art, as it is claimed to be understood (or not understood) by anyone. Whether this is the type of knowledge that *ought to* be involved or not is a question of no concern for us here. We believe that our attempt, in spite its limitations, is a good beginning. But we are, of course, fully aware that it is only a beginning. As a reply to Findlay's objection, we would like to quote what one of us has written on closely related issue:

> Let us not lure ourselves into the belief that just by leaving the armchair and crossing the door of the laboratory, we will be ipso facto better off in our attempt to understand understanding: the conceptual issues will not be disentangled by sheer manipulation of sophisticated gadgets. But the laboratory situation or the attempt to write a computer program may contribute to the disentanglement by forcing the researcher to face precisely the crucial practical question of how to recognize understanding in particular cases (Chapter 3).

Notes

1. We are employing here the term 'story', in a sufficiently broad sense to cover not only the plot of a narrative, but also the 'content' of a painting, of a movement performance, or of any other form of art.

2. For an analysis of the multi-layered structure of the significance of an utterance, see Chapter 6.

3. Cf. Quine (1969: 114-138) on the notion of 'natural kinds'.

4. Cf., for example, the case of the prodigious mnemonist described by Luria (1975). Werner and Kaplan (1963) give many examples of parallelism between verbal and non-verbal 'representation' of events. The phenomenon called 'chrome', for example, refers to the evocation of images of particular colors by certain sounds. Some authors have gone as far as claiming that "synaesthesia is the normal situation". Since "there does not exist any primary isolation between the different senses", and "the isolated sensation is the product of an analysis" (Schilder 1950: 38).

5. Cf. Leibniz's notion of a 'common sense' (Leibniz 1923—, Series VI, volume I, 286-287), which is much more than, say, Locke's 'sense of reflection'.

6. "That which produces a picture in painting also produces a picture in dance. The effect of these two arts is similar; they both have the same role to play … everything that is used in dance is capable of forming pictures, and anything that can produce a pictorial effect in painting may also serve as a model for the dance, as also everything that is rejected by the painter must likewise be rejected by the ballet master" (quoted in Bartenieff 1973: 5).

7. See Langer (1953: 170 ff.). For a discussion, see Bartenieff (1973).

8. See Merleau-Ponty (1945: *passim* and especially 203 ff.). Several authors contend that all forms of expression (including language) have a common origin. For a recent attempt, see Leroi-Gourhan (1964). The relative success in teaching sign-language (and not vocal language) to chimpanzees suggests that such a basis of bodily expression is common to man and other animals as already suggested by Darwin in his *The Expression of Emotion in Man and Animals*.

9. For other conversational maxims that seem to belong to this deep level of 'tradition', see Grice (1975), who suggests that they might be grounded in a still deeper layer, namely 'rationality' itself.

10. Several theoreticians of ballet stress the need to make the repertoire of movements of the dancer completely independent of his natural tendency to associate with such movements' specific contents: "...to make a dancer of a graceful child, it is necessary to begin by dehumanizing him, or rather by overcoming the habits of ordinary life. His muscles learn to bend, his legs are trained to turn outward from the waist ... his torso becomes a completely plastic body ... his entire outline takes on an abstract and symmetrical quality. The accomplished dancer is an artificial being, an instrument of precision and he is forced to undergo rigorous daily exercise to avoid lapsing into his original purely human state" (Levinson 1974: 117).

11. Osborne (1972: 2) says that there has been "an attempt to apply to the statement of aesthetic problems new ways of thinking and speaking in the philosophy of mind, such as were exemplified in G. Ryle's The *Concept of Mind*, but we were unable to trace any specific reference to the application of the know-how vs. know that distinction to aesthetics in general and to dance and movement in particular". Brown (1970: 213 n.1) discusses at length Ryle's distinction and testifies that the only application of this distinction to other philosophical problems he was able to find in print is an application to ethics, by R. C. Cross ("Ethical disagreement", *Philosophy* 25, 1959: 301-315). We came across this reference only after having run the experiment and having written most of this paper. Cross' suggestions are quite similar to ours indeed, for he tries to steer ethics out of the intellectualism vs. emotivism dilemma by arguing that what is involved in morals is neither knowing that something is the case nor having certain feelings, but rather "knowing how to act, how to cope with situations".

12. Who are dualist Cartesians, partisans of the 'intellectualist legend', according to which the mind consists in some sort of inner 'box' within which mental processes occur simultaneously with physical processes. In this 'box', the 'mind's eye' inspects ideas, images and thoughts.

13. For the same reason, we do not have to commit ourselves to Ryle's behaviorism, which relies on the impossibility of reducing know-how to know-that and, ultimately, seems to attempt the opposite reduction.

14. Brown's main contribution to the issue lies, in our opinion, not in his recasting of Ryle's distinction in terms of 'practical' vs. 'non practical' knowledge, but rather in his pointing out that there are, within the former, two types of knowing how (cf. Brown 1970: 219-221).

15. The quotations are from the 1684 paper "On knowledge, truth and ideas", a translation of which can be found in Loemker's selection of Leibniz's papers (cf. Leibniz 1969: 291-295).

16. For a revised version of such an 'expression theory of art', see Elliot (1972). See also Savile (1972) for an attempt to clarify the role of intention in aesthetic experience. The appeal to the spectator's ability to recreate or re-live the creative process of the artist is an instance of the claim often made that, in so far as human activities are concerned, we should strive towards *verstehen* (understanding) rather than to be satisfied with *erklären* (explanation). The appeal to the "existential situation" (of spectator and artist) as the proper vehicle to approach a work of art makes in fact a similar claim. From our point of view, however, *verstehen* and "existential empathy" are concepts that involve certainly a cognitive element of the knowing how type, if they are to fulfill their role in understanding art.

17. In this connection, Appia's vision may be recalled: "L'art dramatique de demain sera un *acte social* auquel chacun apportera son concours. Et — qui sait — peut-être arriverons-nous, après une période de transition, à des fêtes majestueuses où tout un peuple participera: où chacun de nous exprimera son émotion, sa douleur et sa joie, et où

personne ne consentira plus a rester spectateur passif. L'auteur dramatique, alors, triomphera" (Appia 1963: xIII).

18. Such an implication was not actually tested in our experiment. However, prior experience of Varda Dascal with multi-media workshops supports to some extent this claim (cf. V. Dascal 1980).

Chapter 18

Why does language matter to Artificial Intelligence?

Questions whose answers seem obvious have a special power. They insidiously suggest that there may be something wrong with the obvious answers; they insinuate that their apparently solid grounds are perhaps shaky. They thus call attention not so much to the answers, but to their grounds — which is what they in fact call into question.

In this paper, I purport to explore this heuristic power of my title question.[1] I will first review some typical explanations of the undisputable importance of language for AI. Next, I will propose a typology of the grounds offered for such explanations. Finally, I will indicate what kinds of tasks and difficulties any attempt of implementing each of the approaches discerned faces. It is my hope that, by becoming aware of the differences in their underlying assumptions, practitioners as well as users of the new art of AI will be in a better position to judge where they may have gone wrong, to redirect their efforts, and to discern reasonable expectations from unfounded promises.

1. Three answers

1.1 Descartes and turing

After having summarized his theory of blood circulation, of the role of the nerves, and of other aspects of bodily physiology in Part V of the *Discours de la Méthode*, Descartes argues that, whereas well-designed machines could eventually be undistinguishable from animals, they would be easily distinguishable from human beings, for

> ... jamais elles ne pourraient user de paroles ni d'autres signes en les composant, comme nous faisons pour declarer aux autres nos pensées. Car on peut bien concevoir qu'une machine soit tellement faite qu'elle profère des paroles, et même qu'elle en profère quelques-unes à propos des actions corporelles qui

> causeront quelque changement en ses organes; comme si on la touche en quelque endroit, qu'elle demande ce qu'on lui veut dire, si en un autre, qu'elle crie qu'on lui a fait mal, et choses semblables; mais non pas qu'elle les arrange diversement pour répondre au sens de tout ce qui se dira en sa présence, ainsi que les hommes les plus hébétés peuvent faire (Descartes 1967-1975, VI: 56-57).[2]

The inability of animals and machines to use a "true language", i.e., "d'exprimer soit par la voix, soit par les gestes quelque chose qui puisse se rapporter à la seule pensée et non a l'impulsion naturelle" (Letter to Henry More, 5 February 1649; Descartes 1967-1975, V: 278)[3] contrasts sharply with the ability of every man, regardless of his or her level of intelligence, to use such a language. Consequently, language is *the only sure sign of a latent thought in the body* and it can be taken as the *true difference* between men and animals/machines (ibid.).

Descartes's argument was based on the then prevalent conception of machines. According to this conception, a machine's performance is limited — indeed determined — by the number and variety of its parts:

> Car, au lieu que la raison est un instrument universel qui peut servir en toutes sortes de rencontres, ces organes [des machines] ont besoin de quelque particulière disposition pour chaque action particulière; d'ou vient qu'il est moralement impossible qu'il y en ait assez de divers en une machine, pour la faire agir en toutes les occurrences de la vie de même façon que notre raison nous fait agir (Descartes 1967-1975, VI: 57).[4]

Presumably, if confronted with present-day powerful programmable computers, Descartes wouldn't substantially change his position. For he might echo a claim made by many adversaries of AI: a programmed machine does what the programmer tells it to do, in the situations s/he anticipates. Descartes would probably regard any programmed abilities, even the elaborate 'learning' capabilities and heuristics that some programs display, as essentially limited, if not in number at least in variation, for they are the result of some *finite* and *given* application of the programmer's ingenuity. Hence, the machine's 'mechanicity' — as opposed to true creativity in the presence of the really unexpected — is bound to be discovered at some point.

Language behavior plays also the key role as an indicator of intelligence in the well-known Turing Test. The test is based on the 'imitation game', where an interrogator in one room puts questions to a man and a woman in another room, in order to find out who is the man and who is the woman. Replacing one of the humans by a machine that 'tries' to impersonate a human and

communicates with the interrogator through a teletype, the game becomes a test of machine intelligence (cf. Turing 1950).

Unlike Descartes, Turing is not committed to the idea that a machine that passes the test possesses 'consciousness' or any other mental attribute. He proposed a strictly *operational* test: a machine passes the test if its linguistic behavior *counts socially* (at least in the eyes of the interrogator) as a proper use of language. The test does not purport to reveal *what* 'intelligence' (or 'thought') is, but only to provide a *sign* of its presence.[5]

Descartes was convinced that no machine (nor animal) would pass such a test. He would be surprised to learn that several language-using computer programs have been quite successful in fooling even expert interrogators. For example, Colby's artificial paranoiac, PARRY, was diagnosed as such by a group of psychiatrists interviewing mental patients via a teletype. None of the psychiatrists, nor their colleagues that reviewed the transcripts of the interviews, realized that they were interviewing a computer! (cf. Boden 1977: 99-100).

These facts, however, do not detract from the power of the idea that the appropriateness of linguistic behavior to an unrestricted set of situations is perhaps the best indicator of intelligence. For an analysis of these 'successful' programs shows that the devices that do the trick are quite simple ones, which seem to involve no 'true understanding'. Their success in the test is due, to a large extent, to the pre-understandings embedded in the interrogation setting: no doubt the interviewers' assumption that they were dealing with 'mental patients' influenced their judgment, just as human patients 'analyzed' by the 'psychoanalyst' program ELIZA tended to accept the program's vacuous questions as meaningful. Presumably, more stringent applications of the test, where such pre-judgments would be barred and where a wider variety of unexpected inputs were used, would be able to sort out intelligent from 'mechanical' uses of language. Eventually, such applications would then be able to distinguish between natural language processing and natural language understanding systems.

1.2 Hobbes and Fodor

A completely different explanation for the importance of language vis-à-vis cognition is given by Thomas Hobbes, Descartes's contemporary. Hobbes claimed that language has, in addition to its communicative function, not only

some minor cognitive function, but also the highest possible such function. Language, says Hobbes in an often (partially) quoted passage, is the stuff out of which judgment, reasoning and science are made. It is so important that it serves to define the highest faculty of the mind, namely *reason*:

> ... reason, in this sense, is nothing but *reckoning*, that is adding and subtracting, of the consequences of general names agreed upon for the marking and signifying or our thoughts: I say *marking* them when we reckon by ourselves, and *signifying* when we demonstrate or approve our reckonings to other men. ... By this it appears that reason is not, as sense and memory, born with us; nor gotten by experience only, as prudence is: but attained by industry; first in apt imposing of names; and secondly by getting a good and orderly method in proceeding from the elements, which are names, to assertions made by connection of one of them to another; and so to syllogisms, which are the connections of one assertion to another, till we come to a knowledge of all the consequences of names appertaining to the subject in hand; and that is it, men call *science* (*Leviathan* I, 5).

Consistently with this overall cognitive importance assigned to language, Hobbes does not refrain from making truth itself dependent upon words: "truth consisteth in the right ordering of names in our affirmations" (*Leviathan* I, 4). This, of course, was considered scandalous by Hobbes's contemporaries, for it implied the relativization of truth. His computational/linguistic conception of thought, though taken up and developed by such thinkers as Leibniz and Condillac, was in general relegated to oblivion.

Such a conception was discovered anew with the upsurge of computer technology. Stripped of its contention that *natural language* is directly involved in cognitive processes, it was soon to become orthodoxy in the new cognitive science and in AI. According to J. A. Fodor, one of the chief defenders and articulators of this conception, "mental processes [are] computational", i.e., they are "formal operations defined on representations", and the mind is, "inter alia, a kind of computer ... carrying out whatever symbol manipulations are constitutive of the hypothesized computational processes" (Fodor 1980: 230). Unlike Hobbes, Fodor does not assume that the symbols or representations in which cognitive processes are carried on are those of any public language. For public languages are learned through cognitive processes that must already be carried on in some pre-linguistic symbol system. Such a system, which Fodor — following in this respect a Cartesian rather than a Hobbesian path — does not hesitate to consider as innate, deserves the name of 'language of thought'. Since it is necessary for the acquisition of any public language, it must be endowed with a semantic and syntactic power at least

equivalent in complexity to that of any learnable public language (cf. Fodor 1975: *passim*).

From this point of view, then, the importance of language to cognition is obvious: cognitive processes take place in a language-like medium; they are *formal* manipulations of language-like symbols, governed by *syntactic* constraints; acquiring a public language consists in using the 'language of thought' in order to formulate hypotheses about the public language's rules and verifying their empirical adequacy; and understanding a public language utterance is nothing but 'translating' it into its language of thought counterpart.

1.3 Heidegger and Winograd

Unlike Descartes and Hobbes, Heidegger — who also stresses the importance of language — derives such an importance not from its relation to cognition, but from its role as one of the fundamental and irreducible modes of human existence: "*Die Rede ist mit Befindlichkeit und Verstehen existential gleichursprünglich*".[6]

In spite of acknowledging its fundamental role, the early Heidegger theorizes very little about language. In his later writings, he develops his views on language by offering metaphors that are supposed to let the reader see how language works. One of the best known of these metaphors (Heidegger 1947: 53), describes language as the *Haus des Seins* (the house of being). But Heidegger's emphasis is not on the closedness but rather on the 'openness' of this linguistic house: through its metaphorical potential, language enables — rather than constrains — the creative opening of new dimensions of understanding, of existence, and of language itself. From this point of view, the paradigmatic use of language is poetry, which true philosophy is supposed to emulate. In contrast to this, in daily as well as in scientific and technological discourse, the metaphorical potential of language is not enhanced, but used up. For Heidegger, 'cognition', 'theorization' and 'knowledge' — and their characteristic kind of discourse — correspond to partial or abstract ways of relating to the world. If one were to view language as essentially related to these impoverished modes of being, language would thereby be similarly impoverished: it would become a prison rather than an open house, a world-representing mirror, rather than a world-creating power.

Terry Winograd (a pioneer in developing language-using programs) and

his associates have recently launched a sweeping criticism of the accepted paradigm in AI, resorting to Heideggerian ideas both as a critical tool and as an inspiration for an alternative (cf. Winograd and Flores 1987). The key to this critique, as well as to the proposed alternative is a better understanding of the role of language:

> Our central claim in this book is that the current theoretical discourse about computers is based on a misinterpretation of the nature of human cognition and language. Computers designed on the basis of this misconception provide only impoverished possibilities for modelling and enlarging the scope of human understanding. They are restricted to representing knowledge as the acquisition and manipulation of facts, and communication as the transferring of information (Winograd and Flores 1987:78).

Accordingly, computers should be designed "on the basis of the new discourse about language and thought that we have been elaborating", namely:

> Computers are not only designed in language but are themselves equipment for language. They will not just reflect our understanding of language, but will at the same time create new possibilities for the speaking and listening that we do — for creating ourselves in language (Winograd and Flores 1987:79).

According to this view, then, language matters to AI in a very deep sense. For, once a true understanding of the role of language is achieved and implemented in computer design and applications, the latter will no longer be alienated from man. Rather than a threatening or competing tool, the computer will then become man's valuable companion in his quest for creativity and understanding.

2. The functions of language

2.1 Language, mind, and existence

Whereas all the three conceptions presented above agree in viewing language as crucial for AI, it should be clear that they do so on quite different grounds. Let us now review their similarities and differences.

The first two approaches share an undisguised cognitivist outlook. For them, the most significant human capacity is cognition. At any rate, this is the capacity worth emulating or simulating by means of AI's sophisticated artefacts. Language has whatever significance it has because of its relation to

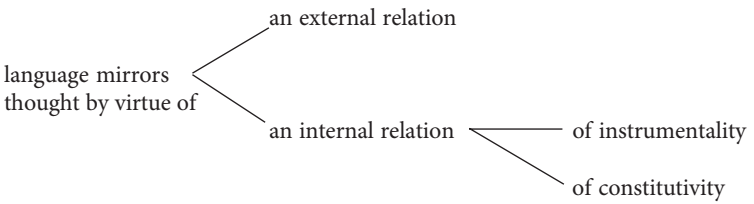
cognition: "Les langues — said Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz — "sont le meilleur miroir de l'esprit humain".[7] The two approaches part company, however, in their conception of this "mirroring" relation.

For the Cartesian approach, language is nothing but the external manifestation of cognition. Thought itself is pure mental activity. Were it not for the fact that we are corporeal as well as mental beings, we would not need language at all, for we could communicate directly our thoughts to each other. Given the fact that we do not have such a direct access to other minds, we need language for communication, and language — properly used — serves as the main (perhaps sole) indicator of the presence of cognition outside of ourselves. But it plays no role in the cognitive processes themselves.

The Hobbesian approach grants language a much more intimate relationship with cognition. Without language none of the higher cognitive functions (memory, judgment, reasoning) would be possible. According to this approach, it is a mistake to consider language as having only a communicative function. For even a solitary individual, quite independently of his or her communicative needs, needs language. Such a language may be public or private, and it may be conceived either as constitutive of cognitive processes or as an indispensable tool for them. Be it as it may, language has an internal rather than external connection with thought.

The following diagram summarizes the similarities and differences between the first two approaches:

Table 1. Language and mind



Unlike its predecessors, the Heideggerian approach does not locate the importance of language in its relation to cognition. Activity or praxis is the human basic existential condition, and cognition has only a secondary — even distorting — role in it. Language is important because it is directly constitutive of human praxis, not because it serves to transmit, represent, or even be instru-

mental in the production of knowledge. The very conception of a mind that 'cognizes' the world, represents it in a (linguistic or non-linguistic) 'model', and produces discourse about it, is misleading for this approach. For it presupposes the validity of those very concepts — e.g., 'representation', 'content', 'subject', 'object' — that, according to Heidegger, are useless and pernicious for our understanding of the human being-in-the-world (*Dasein*). Only a conception of language that rejects such concepts, that severs language's traditional umbilical link with cognition, can capture its real significance. And this is true not only for human beings and their praxis — the AI-Heideggerians would add — but also for their artefacts and *their* praxis.[8]

2.2 The 'place' of meaning

According to the different conceptions about the general significance of language, one should expect to find corresponding differences in the 'location' of language's most significant aspect, namely 'meaning'. For those that relate language primarily to cognition, meaning — whatever it is — should arise from this connection. Thus, for Descartes, it is the thought underlying the words we use that grants them meaning. Locke expressed this view most emphatically by claiming that the meaning of an expression is the 'idea' present in the mind of s/he who utters it.[9] Accordingly, successful communication consists in a satisfactory 'decoding' by the addressee of the ideas 'encoded' in the linguistic sign by the speaker. But the definition of language as having exclusively a communicative function, external to cognition, might as well lead to a different conception of meaning. For, communication being a *social* affair, meaning might be seen as belonging not to the private realm of Lockean ideas, but to the public domain of interaction.[10] On this view, whatever goes on in the minds of the participants in a communicative exchange is irrelevant in so far as their respective behaviors 'make sense' for each other, in the context. Understanding, thus, lies in the adequacy (for whatever reasons) of the participants' reactions to each other's utterances and to the context of the exchange, rather than in appropriate 'decoding'.[11]

For those who see language as inherent to cognition, meaning cannot lie in a correspondence of signs with a non-linguistic cognitive content. It must be somehow explained as belonging in the signs themselves — e.g., in their interrelations, interactions, operational possibilities, etc. It seems thus natural, for this conception, to reduce semantics to syntax.[12]

Given his views on language as one of the non-derivatively significant dimensions of existence, Heidegger too cannot view meaning as lying in a correspondence with 'something else'. Accordingly, he rejects the referential, the Platonic, as well as the ideational and the syntactic views. Meaning, being non-derivative, is for him an irreducible mode of human existence:

> Sinn ist ein Existential des Daseins, nicht eine Eigenschaft die am Seienden haftet, "hinter" ihm liegt oder als "Zwischenreich" irgendwo schwebt. Sinn "hat" nur das Dasein...[13]

2.3 The relevance of use

Language is a very complex phenomenon that can be investigated from different points of view, each preferring one partition of the phenomenon over the others. For our purposes here, it is convenient to recall the partition proposed by Charles Morris (1938). Slightly adapted, Morris' distinction between the syntactic, semantic and pragmatic aspects of language (and other semiotic systems) can be summarized as follows:[14]

Table 2. Syntax, Semantics, Pragmatics

SYNTAX
– Segmenting and recognizing symbols.
– Constructing and parsing well-formed sequences of symbols.
SEMANTICS
– Assigning meaning and reference to individual symbols.
– Assigning meaning and reference to sequences of symbols.
PRAGMATICS
– Using sequences of symbols in a significant manner, in a context of use.
– Interpreting sequences of symbols thus used.

Progress in the investigation of language has roughly followed the descending line in this table. Yet, although pragmatics — the theory of language use — is the most recent and less developed of the linguistic disciplines, its relevance for AI, both in its broad and in its narrow conceptions, should not be underestimated.[15] For, in narrow AI, the user/buyer is king. What counts for him or her is how the system *performs*, regardless of the structures that allow it to do

so. And in broad AI, although these structures are of interest in so far as they yield insights into how the system performs intelligently, the ultimate test of the system's 'intelligence' lies not in its *possession* of such structures, but in its ability to *use* them appropriately.[16] This, of course, does not detract from the importance of the system's mastery of the relevant structures (e.g., grammatical and semantic rules), for on most theories this is a precondition for 'intelligent' behavior. Yet, exclusive focus on endowing a system with these structures, disregarding varying conditions of use, perforce leads to an automatism in the system's performance that soon reveals its 'stupidity'.

The centrality of use emerges clearly in the three different ways of grounding the importance of language we have examined. Both Descartes and Turing do not mention language structure at all in their tests; they refer only to language use. As for the computationalists, their interest is addressed to the cognitive function or use of language, and only derivatively to its structure. And Heidegger's insistence on language as embedded in and constitutive of the existential context and on the degenerative character of 'propositional' language, detached from that context, is a clear indication of the primacy of use over structure, for him.

2.4 Three kinds of pragmatics

The emphasis on use should refer us to the discipline that is supposed to account for it, namely pragmatics. Although pragmatics has been so far restricted to the study of the communicative uses of language, our examination of the alternative conceptions of the importance of language suggests that there is room for other 'kinds' or 'branches' of pragmatics as well. More specifically, in addition to a pragmatics that deals with the communicative or social uses of language, there is also room for: (a) a pragmatics that deals with those cognitive or, more generally, mental uses of language that are not related to communication (e.g., in a person's silent reasoning, dreaming, etc.);[17] and (b) a pragmatics that deals with language use as a component of the world or of human existence. In the light of these findings, in principle we may discern, corresponding to the three approaches to language, three types of pragmatics:

Table 3. Three kinds of pragmatics

SOCIOPRAGMATICS	PSYCHOPRAGMATICS
Investigates the social, other-oriented uses of semiotic systems. *Example*: the communicative uses of language.	Investigates the mental, "private" uses of semiotic systems. *Example*: the use of language in (silent) reasoning.
Such uses must rely on shared (public) rules and contexts, to ensure comprehensibility.	Such uses may rely on idiosyncratic (private) "rules" and contexts, accessible only to the "thinker".

ONTOPRAGMATICS
Investigates the grounding of language in existence and of existence in language. *Example*: the creative power of original metaphors.
This approach transcends both the social and the mental/subjective dimensions of language use.

2.5 Orthodoxy and beyond

The predominant tradition in cognitive science and in AI tends to adopt the Fodorian thesis that natural language is not directly involved in thought. Here is an authoritative expression of this position:

> The position implicit in the analysis of this book can be summed up as follows: (1) the generation or processing of symbol structures that are isomorphic with the strings of natural language or with their surface structures (in the linguist's meaning of that phrase) is inessential to human problem solving of the kinds we examine. (2) The internal symbol structures that represent problems and information about problems are synonymous with the linguist's deep structure. If 'language' means deep structure, then language is essential to thinking and problem solving. In sum, paraphrasing Dewey: (1) the surface structure of language and language strings are the garb or clothing of thought necessary not for the thought but only for conveying it. (2) While linguistic deep structure is not thought, it is necessary for thinking (Newell and Simon 1972: 66).

From this point of view, pragmatics — in so far as it is relevant at all — can only be sociopragmatics. For it can only be involved in the process of 'translating' a natural language input into the deep structure symbols that represent its meaning and that are the only ones relevant to cognitive processes. As for the 'language of thought', it has no pragmatics because it is not 'used' by thought: it is constitutive of thought (see, however, Dascal 1997b).

I surmise that such a quick and wholesale dismissal of pragmatics is damaging for the prospects of AI to develop reasonable language-using programs and for the prospects of cognitive science to produce a satisfactory theory of the mind. The problem of interpretation should be acknowledged in its full complexity, rather than compared to a more or less mechanical or algorithmic decoding (see Chapter 9). This means contributing to the development of sociopragmatic theory and of AI-applicable versions thereof.

But beyond that, it may well be worthwhile for both AI and cognitive science to reconsider the validity of the dogma that precludes the possibility of a direct influence of language on cognition (and hence, of psychopragmatics). It is in fact well attested that the linguistic clothing of a thought (or other cognitive process or state) often affects its content and, consequently, its processing. People who realize this usually adopt one of two strategies. Either they adopt the view that public language is constitutive of cognition, in which case they are hard pressed to explain how, say, Japanese and Israelis are able to hold *the same* beliefs. Alternatively, they shift to a "language of thought" hypothesis or, like Newell and Simon, to a "symbol processing" view, where public language is stripped of *any* significant influence on cognition. Both strategies are unable to explain why *sometimes* language — i.e., public language — directly affects cognitive processes. The pragmatic view of the relationship language/cognition embodied in psychopragmatics allows precisely that much. According to this view, public language is neither constitutive of cognition nor entirely external to it. Accordingly, it may — and occasionally does — play a significant role in the cognitive processes themselves. It is this kind of non-obligatory but often found role or "use" of language in cognition that psychopragmatics allows to investigate in a suitable theoretical framework.

Finally, it may also be worthwhile for AI and cognitive science to admit that ontopragmatic suggestions might not be irrelevant to their concerns, as they seem to assume. For the fundamental existential role of language may

well be a factor that should not be overlooked, even if you are interested only in simulating or understanding cognition.

3. Sociopragmatics

3.1 The sign

What matters in communication is, of course, 'content'. But content is never directly accessible. It is always conveyed through something else, a 'sign'. The sign may be deemed to be the visible tip of an iceberg, while content lies below the surface and can only be reached through an exploratory process that begins with or at least relies on the 'stimulus' provided by the presence of the sign.

The linguistic sign (a letter or a phoneme, a word, a sentence, a text) has a structure (graphemic, phonetic, syntactic) that must be properly identified if one is to be able to recover its content. A 'grammar' in the linguistic sense is a set of rules that allow for the identification of such structures, at their various levels. One usually thinks of a grammar as dealing with units called 'sentences'. But the task of grammar extends both below and above sentence level, thus encompassing, respectively, morphology and phonology as well as 'text-grammar'.

To describe the sign as 'visible' or 'given' should not lead one to belittle the difficulties involved in the task of identifying and appropriately structuring it. In fact, though linguistics' first claims to scientificity were based in its achievements in dealing with phonological and then syntactic structure, the problems at these levels are far from solved, especially in a way useful for AI to handle *speech*. In spoken language, segmentation, form identification and concatenation cannot be assumed to have been already performed by 'someone', as it happens in *writing*. Not surprisingly, most AI programs concerned with 'understanding' bypass these thorny problems by dealing directly with written texts.[19] But, as we shall see, the price paid for this strategy is a significant loss in contextual information, which ultimately impairs the program's ability to 'understand'.[20]

It may well be that, as Hofstadter has starkly put it, "The central problem of AI is the question: *What is the letter* 'a'?", because "for any program to handle letterforms with the flexibility that human beings do, it would have to

possess full-scale general intelligence" (Hofstadter 1986: 633). No doubt, from the way we solve *this* problem of pattern recognition we might eventually learn a lot about the solution of the problem of understanding in general, along the lines suggested by Hofstadter. But rather than exploring this possibility, I will assume that the sign has been somehow properly identified and structured, and proceed to inquire about how we get from it to its purported content.

3.2 The problem of interpretation

To interpret is to extricate the 'right' content from a given sign. The question is: "What is the 'right' content, and how do we reach it?". The prior question is: "Is there such a thing as *the* right content?".

Naturally, different models of interpretation arise from different answers to these questions.[21] The *hermeneutic* model contends that all interpretation is wholly dependent on the interpreter's interests, purposes, and context, so that no such thing as *the* correct interpretation exists. Instead, interpretation is to be viewed as an unending *process* where any 'solution' is to be conceived as a revisable, temporary resting point, itself purpose- and interest-dependent. For this model, content is a construct generated by the interpretation process, being thus neither 'in' the sign nor 'behind' it. The *cryptographic* model stresses, on the contrary, the objectivity of content as something that 'lies there', behind the sign, something that can be 'discovered' by correctly applying the semantic rules of the 'code' to which the sign belongs. The *pragmatic* model contends that communicative intentions are the primary contents the communicative process is supposed to be all about. From this point of view, semantic 'decoding' is only a step in the process of interpretation. Finally, a number of *causal* models seek to disclose the 'real' as opposed to the 'apparent' content of a communicatively used sign in a deeper layer of motivations or forces, that lies beyond the subjects' conscious intentions and control. The Marxian notion of 'ideology' and the Freudian notion of 'rationalization' illustrate this approach to interpretation.

These models do not necessarily exclude each other, for they can be each construed as addressing primarily a different 'layer' or aspect of content. The cryptographic model focuses on the relatively shallow layer of codified meanings which are the traditional concern of semantics; the causal models focus on the very deep layers of motivation, class-interests, biological drives, sur-

vival functions, etc., that are believed to ultimately underlie all our meaning assignments; the pragmatic model is concerned with the speakers' communicative intentions as manifested in their utterances; and the hermeneutic model shifts attention from what underlies the iceberg (the sign) to the iceberg-watcher's contribution to the meaning assignment.

Although there are some AI programs that purport to simulate the kind of interpretation I have called 'causal' (e.g., Abelson's IDEOLOGY MACHINE, Weizenbaum's ELIZA, Colby's 'neurotic' program),[22] AI orthodoxy, when dealing with 'normal' interpretation, seems to favor the cryptographic conception. On this view, understanding consists in transforming or mapping one representation (the sign) into another (cf. Rich 1988: 296). In Newell and Simon's terms (see quotation in section 2.5 above), the latter representations, the ones relevant for cognition, consist in semantically interpreted (sentential) deep structures.

But semantic interpretation is never sufficient *per se*. Although interpretation may begin with semantic decoding, it cannot end there. For, as pointed out by Rich (1988: 296), the interpreting representation must be chosen so as to "correspond to a set of available actions ... so that for each event an *appropriate* action will be performed". And, in order to perform the appropriate action, a system must understand not just the words addressed to it, but the intentions that these words are supposed to convey in their context of use. In communicative exchanges that employ a strictly regimented language (as any of the extant programming languages), the assumption can be made that each 'sentence', whenever 'uttered', expresses unambiguously the same intention (usually, in these cases, either directives or information-bearing statements). But, when considering usual communication and normal language, such an assumption of transparency and univocity can no longer be made. What characterizes human use of language is its pragmatic flexibility. We not only can, but very often do, say one thing and thereby mean (i.e., intend) another. Metaphor, irony, indirect speech acts, Gricean implicatures and other forms of indirectness are far more widespread in our linguistic praxis than we are aware of. A system whose capabilities are restricted to semantic decoding would be unable to understand such utterances; hence, it would not be a comprehensive language understander. In order to become one, it would need to be endowed with the means necessary for pragmatic interpretation as well.

An even stronger point can be made on behalf of the need of pragmatics. Even if the use of pragmatically 'tilted' utterances were the exception rather than the rule, the sheer *existence* of such a possibility makes it mandatory for every language understanding system to be able to discern when an utterance is used in a tilted way and when not. Indeed, even the most innocent looking transparent signs can have their meaning turned upside down in an appropriate context of use. Consider a perfectly clear and understandable picture of a pipe. Once you add to it, as did Magritte, the thought-provoking caption *Ceci n'est pas une pipe* (This is not a pipe), the prior 'semantic' decoding of the picture is called into question and must be revised in the light of its new context. Since a 'tilting' context *might* always be the relevant one, the decision that it is not, i.e., that it is appropriate to interpret the utterance in its semantic sense, is itself a pragmatic, not a semantic decision. Transparency, thus, is nothing but a special case of pragmatic, i.e., contextually based interpretation, rather than an example of purely semantic interpretation.

3.3 The pragmatic model

For these and other reasons, language understanding in communication cannot be explained (and, *a fortiori*, implemented in a system) without taking into account the middle layer of intention-related content, i.e., without a theory of pragmatic interpretation. Let me outline some elements of such a theory.

To make a long story short, the secret of our success in understanding reasonably well both transparent and indirect utterances lies in our ability to judiciously combine semantic and contextual information. The steps involved in this process may be systematized as follows:[23]

Table 4. Pragmatic interpretation

(a) Assume, tentatively, that speaker's meaning (SM) = utterance meaning (UM).
(b) Check for fit: could the speaker, given what you know about him/her and about the context of utterance (i.e., given the relevant 'second channel' information available to you), have meant UM, only UM, and all of UM?
(c) If yes, endorse assumption (a) and proceed to utilization procedure.
(d) If not, provide diagnosis of misfit. Format: 'Speaker could not have meant UM/only UM/all of UM [choose one], because **** [specify reason]'.
(e) Check for non-intentional causal explanation:[24]
  (1) Are there indications of a general breakdown in the communicative framework?
  (2) Are there indications that the speaker is not aware of specific requirements of the situation and/or of specific rules that apply to it?
  (3) Are there indications that the speaker cannot comply with such requirements and/or rules?
  (4) Are there obvious, readily correctible mistakes in the utterance?
  (5) Is there a misunderstanding, either by the speaker or by you?
  (6) Is there any other plausible non-intentional causal explanation for the misfit?
(f) If a non-intentional causal explanation is available, proceed according to the specific procedure for the type of explanation found.
(g) If no non-intentional causal explanation is found, activate procedure for generating, on the basis of the diagnosis in step (d), one 'near' alternative meaning. If such a meaning has not yet been tested, check it for fit, as in (b).
(h) If the selected alternative meaning fits, endorse it, assign to it an appropriate degree of indirectness, and proceed to utilization procedure.
(i) If the alternative selected meaning does not fit, return to step (g).

Notice that the passage from semantic to pragmatic interpretation is performed through a *negative* question: "Is there any reason *not* to accept the semantic reading as appropriate, in the context?". An affirmative answer concludes the process, while a negative one serves as an indication (a *cue*) that further interpretive effort is needed.

I wish I could report that I have followed Sloman's suggestion to the effect that the best way to put to test philosophical speculations (or, for that matter, any theory) is by "expressing them in some sort of computer program or at least in a sketch for a design of a working program" (Sloman 1978: 97). But I have at least formulated the above steps in such a way that they can be easily represented in a flow-chart (cf. Dascal 1983: 150-151), which in turn might inspire some AI researcher to write a program for pragmatic interpretation along such lines.

3.4 The roles of context

The key role in the pragmatic drama is played by that ubiquitous and slippery character, the 'context'. Our iceberg, in fact, is never isolated (if it were, this significant fact should be marked as 'null context'). Any sign is always surrounded by circumstances that must be taken into account in its interpretation. It is surrounded by other 'visible' signs, objects, and events with which it stands in syntagmatic relations. Usually invisible, but no less important, is the set of paradigmatic relations (analogies, similarities, oppositions, etc.) which the interpreting system's memory must bring to bear on the process of interpretation. Furthermore, the whole picture is drawn against a blurred, inarticulate 'background', whose role in interpretation should not be neglected either. All this, and much more, is comprised in the 'context' normally used for understanding even the most prosaic utterance.

One of the imperatives of sociopragmatics is to try to analyze and organize the different kinds and roles of the context (see Chapter 8a). The context as providing both *cues* and *clues* for interpretation. In the former capacity, it is the *existence*, say, of a mismatch between the semantic reading and some component of the context that signals the need for further interpretive effort. In the latter capacity, the *nature* of the mismatch leads to the formulation of the new interpretive hypothesis. For instance, if replying to my question "Why did John spank Mary?" you reply: "How much are two and two?", you do not, ostensively, match my question with a straightforward answer. This is a cue to the effect that I should not interpret your utterance as intending to convey a real question. How then should I interpret it? One clue lies in the fact that your 'question' is not an ordinary question, but rather one that has an obvious answer. I am entitled then to hypothesize that your utterance means "You know very well the answer" or the like (see Chapter 2). Notice that my interpretation of your utterance makes use, among other things, of the specific meta-linguistic context (my preceding utterance), of the background meta-linguistic context (my knowledge about what kind of speech act should follow a question), and of our presumably shared background extra-linguistic knowledge of arithmetic.

3.5 Multi-channel information and impoverished contexts

In interpretation, we make constant use of all possible kinds of contextual information available. Curtailing any of the channels of such information is

likely to impair understanding. When such a curtailment is a permanent or anticipated condition, compensations are developed by the communicators, in the form of an enhanced use of, and sensitivity to, the remaining channels. But there are limits to compensation, for there are kinds of information that cannot be transmitted by alternative channels: sophisticated as they may be, verbal descriptions of acoustic, visual or tactile patterns are not the equals of their direct perception. Furthermore, the attempt to squeeze all the information required for interpretation in one single channel would soon overload that channel, rendering it ineffective.

Written communication takes place in such an impoverished context, where most of the non-verbal clues for interpretation are not available. In so far as such clues are relevant for understanding — and they certainly are — they must somehow be packed into the text itself. That is to say, the text must be made independent of them. A fully explicit or self-contained text would be one for which all other forms of context-dependence were eliminated too. But this would involve packing into the text such a huge amount of information that would make it not more, but much less intelligible.[25]

Barring, then, the possibility of self-containment even in written texts, the confinement of communication to writing amounts to the suppression of contextual information necessary for interpretation.[26] Since the carefully contrived situation of the Turing test is impoverished precisely in this way, no wonder that 'passing' it cannot serve as a criterion for a system's *pragmatic* understanding of what is 'said' to it. For, without the possibility of contextual checking, there is no way in which the communicative intention of a speaker can be attached to his or her words.

3.6 The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak

Let me illustrate some of the complexities involved in sociopragmatics by an example, drawn from an anecdote that was very popular in the early days of machine translation. Given the English sentence "The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak", the program translated it into Russian. Since none of those attending the demonstration understood Russian, the only way to check the program's performance was to have the Russian sentence translated back into English. The result was: "The vodka is good but the meat is rotten".

Setting aside the two-language aspect of the story, let us take the second sentence to represent the program's interpretation of the first. The question I

want to address is this: How did the program reach this presumably wrong reading? Suppose it begins from left to right. The word *spirit* has, in the program's dictionary, two different senses, say "soul" and "alcohol". One of the latter's hyponyms is "alcoholic beverage". This concept, in turn, is likely to be construed, in different cultures, in terms of different *prototypes*. In Britain, the prototype would be whiskey, in Mexico, tequila, in Russia, vodka. A path of semantic relations of this kind, suitably modified by the extra-linguistic cultural context, must have been followed by the program in order to distil *vodka* out of *spirit*.

But why didn't it follow the other possible semantic path, beginning with "soul"? The next word, *willing*, which is subsumed under the concept "mental attitude" fits this path, but not the alcohol one. In the absence of context, the program's choice seems to be entirely unmotivated. So, perhaps it construes the 'conversation' as taking place in a restaurant. This fact activates in its memory the *script* RESTAURANT, where beverages, food, etc. are prominent. "Soul" would clearly be much less of a match for this script than "alcohol" (provided the latter immediately leads to "alcoholic beverage" rather than to "disinfectant", which would be more in line with the script HOSPITAL). Having thus chosen "alcohol", on the strength of the presumed extra-linguistic specific contextual clue, the program must get rid of the unfitting "mental attitude" reading of *willing*. This word has a "positive" *connotation*, and the program knows that sometimes words are used not to convey their denotation, but only their connotation (meta-linguistic background context). It thus retains *good* as the interpretation of *willing*. Now, the ambiguity of *flesh* ("body" vs. "meat") can be solved according to the preceding choices. What about *weak*? Why to choose the path "of poor quality" rather than, say, "soft" — which would be appropriate to *meat*? Here the semantics and pragmatics of the connective *but* intervene (cf. Chapter 6). There must be a *contrast* of some sort (not necessarily semantic: cf. "He is a Republican, but honest") between the two clauses linked by *but*. "Soft" is rejected because it would not provide such a contrast, whereas "of poor quality" contrasts nicely with the positive evaluation previously read into *willing*.

Hardly anybody, besides our poor program, would provide such an interpretation for the input sentence. And yet, we recognize it as a *possible* interpretation, albeit a very unlikely one. Otherwise, we wouldn't laugh; we would only be puzzled. In understanding the whole story as a joke, we *reframe* it accordingly.[27] The computer's clever interpretation now is perceived as the

result of making all the wrong interpretive choices. In a Freudian vein, we laugh because we are reassured of our superiority over this apparently clever, but in fact quite stupid machine.

It is not easy to pinpoint the reasons for the program's going wrong. Perhaps they lie in the impoverished context provided to it. Or in the fact that it lacks a list of popular sayings, which could have led it to try to find an equivalent saying in the Russian list, rather than "translating". Or else in the program's inability to shift scripts, paths, or readings once they have been 'activated'. Were this to be done by providing an overall 'meta-script', the program might then be stuck with it, unable to 'jootse' (jump out of the system; Hofstadter 1986: 541), e.g., by moving from the "serious" to the "joking" frame of mind. Whatever the reasons, and the possible ways of overcoming them, it is clear that programs that purport to understand language have yet to learn a lot of sociopragmatic tricks.

4. Psychopragmatics

4.1 Dreams

Since I have concluded the preceding section with jokes, I will begin the present one with a brief discussion of language use in dreams.[28] For, as Freud persuasively argued, there is a close similarity between these two phenomena. We employ similar techniques to manufacture jokes and dreams. In both cases, 'condensation' and 'displacement', for instance, produce a camouflaged expression of some underlying (unconscious) content. Freud also noted that words are particularly suited for such a camouflaging process, because of their multiple ambiguity and richness of associative links. Consequently, language provides a powerful bag of tricks, which is constantly exploited in both jokes and dreams, along similar lines.

Yet, Freud was aware of a crucial difference between the two phenomena. Whereas a dream is "a completely asocial mental product", a joke is "the most social of all the mental functions that aim at a yield of pleasure". This contrast between an eminently social activity and an entirely 'private' one epitomizes, in so far as both activities employ language, the difference between the sociopragmatic and the psychopragmatic points of view. Communication, no matter how indirect and devious, is a social game of cooperation, where lack of mutual intelligibility means a net loss for all parties involved. Intelligibility is

ensured by adherence to public, shared sociopragmatic norms and procedures that regulate the communicative use of language and the interpretive practice. In a purely mental activity, by contrast, language is not used to convey 'messages' from one person to another.[29] Accordingly, the user is free to employ language as s/he pleases, and the norms and constraints — if any — that regulate the mental uses of language cannot be assumed to be identical to their sociopragmatic counterparts. In some mental activities (e.g., problem-solving), recoverability of content may be a desideratum. But it can be eventually achieved not by respecting the public linguistic conventions, but rather by the creation of an idyosincratic, private 'code' (as do some mnemonists, for example). In other mental activities, such as dreams, the desideratum (from the point of view of the dreaming subject) is rather — according to Freud — non-recoverability: only the skilled psychoanalyst knows how to recover the carefully hidden content. The dreamer makes use of linguistic materials as building blocks for her dreams, without respect for syntactic, morphological, semantic, or sociopragmatic rules. The mechanisms of condensation and displacement can put together or dissociate words, phrases, or whole utterances based on associations of any kind — e.g., phonetic, semantic, contextual. And yet, to be 'acceptable' to consciousness, the result — the dream — must display a remarkable inner coherence, and the words therein must preserve an appearance of intelligibility.

Were we to program a computer to simulate dreaming, we should somehow gather a better understanding of the psychopragmatics of language-use in dreams. As far as I know, although dreaming has been recognized as an important cognitive process,[30] AI has not yet tried to simulate it. But one of its major aims has always been to simulate other cognitive processes, such as reasoning. What is surprising is its lack of awareness of the need to take into account the psychopragmatic role of language in such processes. To this we turn now our attention.

4.2 Language and 'bad' logic

According to the cognitivist orthodoxy, once a linguistic formulation of a problem is 'understood', i.e., mapped "from its original form to a more useful one" (Rich 1988: 298), the original, less useful form is discarded and should no longer interfere with the problem-solving process. On such a view, pragmatics plays a role — if at all — only in the mapping stage, i.e., *qua* sociopragmatics.

Since the reasoning involved in the problem-solving process is to be entirely performed in the "more useful", language-free representational space, there is no room at all for psychopragmatic considerations.

The trouble is that somehow language keeps 'interfering' in reasoning. This interference shows up in people's stubborn deviances from the 'right' canons of logic. Consider for example the following reasoning task, investigated by P.C. Wason. You are going to be shown four cards. You know that each card has a letter on one side and a number on the other and that either side may be visible to you. The cards will lie on a table, so that you will be able to see only one side of each card. Now you are shown these four cards:

A **F** **3** **8**

together with this statement about them:

IF A CARD HAS A VOWEL ON ONE SIDE
THEN IT HAS AN EVEN NUMBER ON THE OTHER SIDE

Your task is to pick up those cards, and only those cards, which you would need to turn over in order to find out whether this statement is true or false (Wason 1981:412). Take up a moment to solve the problem and write down your answer.

Variants of this relatively simple problem have been intensively tested, and the vast majority of subjects provide the wrong answer. They select the cards **A** and **8** to be turned over. But the logically correct answer is **A** and **3**, since only these can falsify the conditional statement. Why do people persistently make this logical mistake? One answer might be that their logic is at fault, i.e., that they are not familiar with the logical properties of conditionals. Another hypothesis, favored by Wason in a later article (Wason and Evans 1975), is that the logic is O.K. and what causes the mistake is the interference of language: people simply try to 'match' the symbols in the cards with those mentioned in the conditional sentence, regardless of whether a selection based on this principle is relevant or not to the solution of the problem. That is to say, the linguistic representation of the problem is not simply discarded once it is understood, giving way to a pure logical representation, upon which reasoning operates. Rather, the linguistic representation continues somehow to play a role in the cognitive process, a role that influences its outcome, producing a 'matching bias'.[31]

Results such as these (found also in other experiments) may provoke

different reactions, especially on AI designers. One such reaction is to say that, since the interference of language leads to such grave mistakes in problem-solving, stringent precautions should be taken in order to safely insulate the system's reasoning from any linguistic influence. Another, coming from those interested not so much in 'correct' reasoning but rather in reproducing the results of actual human reasoning, might consist in proposing to replace standard by some kind of non-standard logic (e.g., non-monotonic, para-consistent, or relevance logics), as a move towards a better fit with human 'natural' logic. As an alternative to these two drastic strategies, the psycho-pragmatic outlook suggests that designers should first question the orthodox view that language is or should be external to thought, and proceed to investigate more closely its role in cognitive processes, which may well turn out to be, in general, not so negative and error-inducing as in the example discussed.

4.3 Language as a context of thought

In some mental processes, language's influence on the process may be due to its lying at its very heart, as claimed by constitutivists like Hobbes. On the Fodorian, 'syntactic' version of computationalism, where the medium of thought is not directly natural language, the latter can influence it only through its *formal* properties. On this view, an explanation for the 'matching bias' phenomenon might run as follows. The limited vocabulary of Wason's problem includes the following symbols: (i) the names of individual letters and numbers, (ii) the names of four general categories (vowel, consonant, even, odd), and (iii) the logical connectives. The symbols in class (iii) are governed by the rules of logical 'syntax', which determine the logical structure of the problem. The relevant relations between the linguistic symbols in classes (i) and (ii) is also of a 'syntactic' nature, expressed in the rule: Every symbol in (i) in necessarily an instantiation of one of the four categories in (ii). An appropriate solution to the problem requires putting this linguistic syntax to the service of the logical syntax. Yet, for most subjects, the linguistic syntax 'refuses' to accept this subordinate role. For these subjects the instructions mean not only "Determine those instances that verify or falsify the conditional", but also "Find instantiations of the categories named in the conditional statement". Each subject's solution for the task will depend on the relative strength, for him, of these different and conflicting readings. The phenomenon of interference between the two readings will thus be explained,

according to this view, as a matter of the interaction between two competing formal structures.

While this pattern of explanation may be suitable for accounting for the influence of language on thought in some well-defined domains (as is Wason's problem), it seems to unduly restrict such an influence. For only the rigidified relational structures of language are allowed to play a role in or interfere with mental computations. This conception corresponds to the Bergsonian thesis that verbal categories are rigid abstract patterns, unfit to capture an essentially fluid reality — a view echoed in Hofstadter's (1986: 561) claim that "a frozen verbal phrase is like a snapshot that gives a perfect likeness at one moment but fails to show how things can slip and move".

But language's potentialities go well beyond this frozen snapshot of its nature. Recall Heidegger's talk of the power of original metaphors. Even so-called frozen metaphors are far more complex and rich than usually thought: they form part of a huge underlying network of "metaphorical concepts" in terms of which we organize most of our experience and talk (cf. Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Lakoff 1985; see also Chapter 11). Language is in fact the most impressive source we have for associations, comparisons, analogies and other 'slippery' connections necessary for creative thought. Language's characteristic feature is that it is partly rigid (formally codified) and partly loose. To restrict its role in cognition only to the former part is the psychopragmatic equivalent of the sociopragmatic impoverishment of context (cf. section 3.5). This attitude amounts to assigning to language only a psycho*semantic* role (cf. Fodor 1987; Dascal 1997b). As opposed to this, a psycho*pragmatic* attitude towards language permits to conceive of it not necessarily as a formal vehicle of thought (or interfering in thought), but as a rich, open-ended, flexible, suggestive, fluid and vast *context* of mental processes. From this perspective, mental processes may or may not be linguistically constituted. What matters is that whatever their constitutive structure, a sea of *linguistic* icebergs — from tip to bottom — surround and support them.

5. Ontopragmatics

5.1 The program

The approach to AI I have dubbed 'ontopragmatic', as instantiated in Winograd and Flores's (1987) book, criticizes the cognitivist computationalist or-

thodoxy along similar lines. It stresses the 'blindness' of rigid conceptual schemes, the indispensable role of an ever-present and inarticulate 'background', the open-ended, creative aspects of language. Some of the Heideggerian theses it puts forth are (32ff.): "Our implicit beliefs and assumptions cannot all be made explicit"; "Practical understanding is more fundamental than detached theoretical understanding"; "We do not relate to things primarily through having representations of them"; "You cannot step back and reflect on your actions"; "Every representation is an interpretation"; "Language is action".[32]

This approach goes one (big) step beyond both the sociopragmatic and the psychopragmatic viewpoints when it becomes truly ontological, contending that "*nothing exists except through language*" (Winograd and Flores 1986:68; italics in the original). It further purports to ground AI's "new conception of design" precisely in this ontological claim: "...this apparently paradoxical view (that nothing exists except through language) gives us practical orientation for understanding and designing computer systems" (69).

No doubt the emphasis on the ontological dimension of design draws attention to the important fact that "the domain created by a design is a domain in which people live" (179). It also rightly insists that "[design] constitutes an intervention in the background of our heritage, growing out of our already-existent ways of being in the world, and deeply affecting the kinds of beings that we are" (163), and, consequently, that "our tools are part of the background in which we can ask what it is to be human" (ibid.). The dominant tradition in AI is criticized precisely on account of the type of human self-understanding it forces upon us:

> As we work with devices whose domains of action are based on an interpretation of 'data', 'goals', 'operators', and so forth, we develop patters of language and action that reflect these assumptions. These carry over into our understanding of ourselves and the way we conduct our lives. Our criticism of descriptions of human thought as 'decision making' and language understanding as the manipulation of representations ... reflects a deeper concern with the discourse and actions than that generated by a rationalistic interpretation of human action. Computer systems can easily reinforce this interpretation, and working with them can reinforce patterns of acting that are consistent with it (Winograd and Flores 1986:178).

Yet, in spite of these dangers, the authors do not recommend that we abandon computers altogether. They believe that it is possible to "create computer systems whose use leads to better domains of interpretation" (179), i.e., sys-

tems that reflect a pre-understanding which is fully aware of the ontological implications of design, of the roles of background, breakdowns, blindness, and readiness-to-hand — in short, truly Heideggerian computer systems.

The only illustration of such a system sketched in the book I am referring to is that of a managerial system. The fundamental contention is that management should not be viewed as having to do primarily with setting goals, choosing between alternative courses of action, making and implementing decisions, and solving problems. Accordingly, an organization should not be viewed as structured in such terms, and computer 'aids' to management should not be conceived as supporting such tasks. An organization is rather a "network of commitments" (150). And such commitments arise in "conversation":

> ... the key elements are the conversation among the affected parties and the commitment to action that results from reaching resolution (151); the conversational dimension permeates every realm of coordinated activity (158); the principal characteristic of deliberation is that it is a kind of conversation (in which one or many actors may participate) (149).

The linguistic dimension is thus raised to the position of the fundamental mode of existence of organizations and to the basic concern of management. It is linguistic acts that bring into existence problems, relevant alternatives, and commitments to courses of action.[33] Accordingly, "the most fruitful domain for understanding and facilitating management" is the "domain of speech acts and conversation" (144), and the new tools the authors propose deal essentially with this domain:

> Computer-based tools can be used in requesting, creating, and monitoring commitments. They can provide answers to the question 'What do I need to do?', or as we prefer to put it, 'What is the status of my active commitments?' (158).

Unfortunately, this sample illustration, even if described in more detail, cannot serve to test the viability of applying Heidegger's views to AI. For in its essentials, it obviously resorts to the less arcane theory of speech acts, rather than to the Heideggerian conceptual apparatus, even though it intersperses here and there elements of the latter. We shall return to this point in section 5.3. At present, let us consider not a particular illustration, but the more general issue of the possibility of implementing this full range of ideas in AI.

5.2 Heidegger against Heideggerian AI

Eventually, computer systems could be built so as to incorporate *some* of Heidegger's theses. But could they be designed so as to be attuned to the full import of the Heideggerian ethos?

Heidegger's 'ontopragmatization' of language is based on a thorough critique of the tendency to transform the 'theoretical' or 'propositional' mode of language use into the dominant or primary one. According to him, the assertive mood — on which the 'theoretical' use of language is centred — is derivative from a more basic use of language: "Zuhandenheit" or praxis. In this basic form of use, an utterance is naturally embedded in the wholeness of a concrete experience, and it is unproblematically and immediately understood as such. The propositional or assertive uses of language arise only as a result of a breakdown or problematization, whereby instead of relating to the impact of the concrete thing itself, we react rather to the "cognitive content" of the words. The result is an "inversion" of perspective, whereby the originally clear understanding of the belonging of the thing to its concrete context disappears, giving way to hidenness:

> Das in der Vorhabe gehaltene Seiende, der Hammer zum Beispiel, ist zunächst zuhanden als Zeug. Wird dieses Seiende "Gegenstand" einer Aussage, dann vollzieht sich mit dem Aussageansatz im Vorhinein ein Umschlag in der Vorhabe. Dass *zuhandene Womit* des Zutunhabens, der Verrichtung, wird zum "*Worüber*" der aufzeigenden Aussage... *Durch* die Hinsicht und für sie wird das Zuhandene als Zuhandenes verhüllt.[34]

This implies not only a subversion of language use, but also a loss in existential status: the "objectified" thing now becomes "cut" from its concrete existential mode, it becomes a dead abstraction: "Es ist bezüglich seiner Moeglichkeiten der Artikulation von Verweisungsbezuegen von der Bedeutsamkeit ... abgeschnitten".[35]

Heidegger views the development of Western metaphysics, coupled with the development of science and technology, as a continuous expansion of the theoretical mode, which gradually becomes the dominant one, and aspires to a monopoly on truth. And he is highly critical of this trend, because, for him, within a realm of 'truth' thus defined, Man looses the possibility of confronting his Self: "*Indessen begegnet der Mensch heute in Wahrheit gerade nirgends mehr sich selber, d.h. seinem Wesen*" (Heidegger 1962: 27).

This basic orientation of the Heideggerian critique is embarrassing (to say

the least) for any proposal of an alternative program for AI based on Heidegger. For AI, whatever its pretension to become 'humanized', remains a typical instantiation of the theoretical/technological mode of cognition and discourse. What is 'designing' a system, if not using a set of abstract concepts and procedures in order to specify the conditions that a concrete product of human activity must satisfy? Under these circumstances, how can one expect that the product of such an activity, the implemented system, will be devoid of the de-humanizing characteristics of its mode of production? From a Heideggerian perspective, the likelihood is that our computer 'companion', even if designed according to allegedly Heideggerian principles, instead of offering new possibilities for "creating ourselves in language" — as claimed by Winograd and Flores — will perpetuate the monopoly of that mode of discourse that prevents such possibilities to arise.

5.3 What can be rescued?

It would be premature to assess the prospects of the ontopragmatic program in AI, especially on the basis of the sole examination of one of its early products. The following remarks should be taken only as preliminary evaluative comments.

First, it should be stressed that the program departs from current ways of conceptualizing the relationship language/computer systems. Winograd and Flores, by stressing the ontopragmatic dimension of language use, and by rejecting — with Heidegger — the emphasis on "intelligence" and "theory", are in fact allowing for a reinterpretation of the Turing Test. Success in passing the test would be, at most, a sociopragmatic achievement. It might even count as a proof that the machine has some sort of "intelligence" or is able to "understand". But, for Winograd and Flores, this would not qualify the machine as a true language-user, comparable to humans, in so far as *this* kind of language use is merely "instrumental", thus lacking the ontopragmatic significance that is essential to the human involvement with language.

What is unfortunate in Winograd and Flores's account is the tendency to equate the ontopragmatic with the social (e.g., through their choice of a notion such as that of commitment). Their peculiar combination of Heidegger and Wittgenstein undermines the originality of the ontopragmatic perspective, for it suggests its possible reduction — after all — to sociopragmatics. The same combination also tends to rule out the possibility and legitimacy of an inde-

pendent psychopragmatics. But, as Fetzer (1990: 295) has pointed out, Winograd and Flores have not shown that there is any difficulty in imagining individual sign-users employing purely "private languages". In order not to get involved here in the thorny debate about private languages, I would only insist that Winograd and Flores have not even shown — and, in my view, they could not possibly show — that all language-*use* is social. This possibility is all that is needed in order to legitimize both a psychopragmatic and a (not necessarily social) ontopragmatic point of view.

To my mind, one of the main advantages of bringing pragmatic considerations to bear on ever more fundamental aspects of existence is its effect on the notions of cognition and knowledge in general, and on their use in AI in particular. The traditional conception of an objective world "out there" which we cognize by virtue of "representing" it "in our heads" (or in a system's "head") is effectively undermined by the ontopragmatic critique. Accordingly, it must be replaced by a 'pragmatic' conception of knowledge and cognition, where the relevant criterion is not accuracy of representation, but the ability of the 'knower' to play successfully the social game of justification. I have argued for the relevance of this conception to AI elsewhere (Dascal 1989b).

In such a game, the notion of commitment certainly plays a central role. But to analyze it in terms of speech-act theory does not do justice to its full range, especially to its existential aspects, for which the related — but different — notion of "involvement" is more pertinent (cf. Chapter 7). Furthermore, translating the ontopragmatic insights into the idiom of speech-act theory amounts to reducing them to what many consider to be the centerpiece of sociopragmatics.[36] This, in itself, can hardly be blamed. But it might imply the loss of potentially irreducible, specific and original *onto*pragmatic contributions, which in turn would undermine the hypothesized status of ontopragmatics as a separate branch or kind of pragmatics.

Furthermore, the emphasis on its sociopragmatic side leads to overlook the psychopragmatic implications of the ontopragmatic outlook. The phenomenon of the 'blindness' induced by linguistic and conceptual structures directly affects cognition, regardless of communication. No less important, from a psychopragmatic point of view, is the creative potentialities latent in linguistic and conceptual structures, which the Heideggerian poetic view of language has highlighted.

It remains to be seen how well the ontopragmatic point of view — which need not be restricted to a Heideggerian outlook — will fare as a new alterna-

tive in AI. Whatever the outcome, its contribution so far to the other two points of view are not negligible.

* * *

There is no conclusion to this paper, for it has been a *tour d'horizon* of the main approaches to language relevant to AI, as I see them. Though defenders of each approach tend to exclude the others, they are not intrinsically incompatible with each other. Some judicious combination of the full power of all of them might, for all we know, pave the way for designing machines that use language in a more understanding way, in a more thought-sustaining way, and in a more ready-to-hand way.

Notes

1. My title paraphrases that of Hacking's book (1975). Although the answers to *his* question are less obvious, their exploration reveals important basic differences in approaches to meaning and cognition. For an attempt to set up systematically these differences in the 17th and 18th centuries, see Dascal (1990b); see also Dascal (1995b). Perhaps not surprisingly, the different assumptions regarding the importance of language for AI correlate with different philosophical conceptions of the role of language, as will become apparent in what follows.

2. "... they could never use speech or other signs as we do when placing our thoughts on record for the benefit of others. For we can easily understand a machine's being constituted so that it can utter words, and even emit some responses to action on it of a corporeal kind, which brings about a change in its organs; for instance, if it is touched in a particular part it may ask what we wish to say to it; if in another part it may exclaim that it is being hurt, and so on. But it never happens that it arranges its speech in various ways, in order to reply appropriately to everything that may be said in its presence, as even the lowest type of man can do" (Descartes 1967: 116).

3. "... it has never yet been observed that any brute animal reached the stage of using real speech, that is to say, of indicating by word or sign something pertaining to pure thought and not to natural impulse" (Descartes 1970: 245).

4. "For while reason is a universal instrument which can serve for all contigencies, these organs have need of some special adaptation for every particular action. From this it follows that it is morally impossible that there should be sufficient diversity in any machine to allow it to act in all the events of life in the same way as our reason causes us to act" (Descartes 1967: 116). A few paragraphs thereafter, referring to animals, Descartes says that "they have no reason at all, and that it is nature which acts in them according to the disposition of their organs, just as a clock, which is only composed of wheels and weights, is able to tell the hours and measure the time more correctly than we can do with all our wisdom" (Descartes 1967: 117).

5. In fact, the test (if passed) would provide an indication of a *high* level of intelligence. For it requires that the machine be able to *deceive* the interrogator. The inability to lie or fake behavior is taken to be an indication of the limitations of whatever intelligence some animals have (see Bennett 1964; Dretske 1988). In this respect, since it is primarily a test of the ability to deceive, the Turing Test should be compared not with Descartes's claims about language use, but rather with his Great Deceptor, the Evil Genius. Presumably, a machine analogue of the Cartesian cogito, if at all possible, would be immune to the deception of the Turing Test as well.

6. Heidegger (1927: 161), italics in the original. "Discourse is existentially equiprimordial with state-of-mind and understanding" (Engl. transl.: 203).

7. "Languages are the best mirror of the human mind" (Leibniz 1875-1890, V: 313; Book III, Chapter 7, Paragraph 6).

8. A recent ad in TIME Magazine tries to cater for the favour of all those who share the cognitivist outlook, regardless of their precise position in the diagram above, by combining the terms 'picture' and 'counterpart' in its description of the relationship between language and thought. Here is part of the text: "Language is the picture and counterpart of thought. How will man and machine work together in the future? This intriguing philosophical and functional question has a promising answer: with the spoken word". The rest of the ad mostly insists on communication ("Man will talk to Machine and Machine will respond — for the benefit of Man"), though it hints at a use of language in machine "cognition" itself ("...developing sophisticated new word-based systems"). The "work together" suggestion, if set apart from the rest, could even be favoured by Heideggerians.

9. "*Words, in their primary or immediate signification, stand for nothing but the ideas in the mind of him that uses them...*" (*Essay*, Book 3, Chapter 2, Paragraph 2; emphasis in the original).

10. Alternatively, for those unhappy both with the subjective and with the social relativization of meaning, there is always the possibility of 'locating' it in a Platonic, separate realm, or else in the 'objective' reference of language to the world.

11. On one of its versions, which seeks to minimize if not to eliminate the role of the 'mental states' of the interacting subjects, this conception has been put forth by the later Wittgenstein. Along similar lines, Rapaport (1988) argues that such a "social" conception of meaning is both necessary and sufficient for accounting for the Turing Test. In a more metaphysical vein, the 'dialogical' doctrine of Martin Buber contends that meaning belongs primarily to the intersubjective domain (the "Zwischenmenschlich"), to be conceived not only as the meeting place of pre-formed 'subjects', but as the sphere that gives rise to and shapes the individuality of subjects.

12. Such a move is made by Fodor regarding the 'language of thought' (cf. sections 1.2 and 4.2 of this essay). It has been, to some extent, prefigured by Leibniz in the 17th century (see Dascal 1987b).

13. "Meaning is an *existential* of Dasein, not a property attaching to entities, lying 'behind' them, or floating somewhere as an 'intermediate domain'. Dasein only 'has' meaning..." (Heidegger 1927: 151; Engl. transl.: 193).

14. For a criticism of Morris' trichotomy, and for proposed revisions in the conceptions of semantics and pragmatics, see Dascal (1983: Chapter 1); see also Chapter 1.

15. Broadly conceived, AI is a discipline that endeavors to use computer programs "as tools in the study of intelligent processes, tools that help in the discovery of the thinking-procedures and epistemological structures employed by intelligent creatures" (Boden 1977: 17). Narrowly conceived, it is a technical activity whose aim is to create programs that perform intelligent tasks for specific purposes.

16. From this perspective, 'intelligence' should be construed as an *adverb* or an *adjective* that qualifies certain types of activity or behavior, rather than as a *noun* referring to some alleged 'faculty' (cf. Ryle 1949). See also Chapter 17.

17. Such 'inner' uses or effects of language are not easy to investigate, to be sure. I have argued for the 'right of existence' of this branch of pragmatics in Dascal (1983, 1984). For examples of the phenomena it deals with, see Chapter 16 and Dascal (1987a).

19. "Written language is a fairly recent invention and still plays a less central role than speech in most activities. But understanding written language (assuming it is written in unambiguous characters) is easier than understanding speech. To build a program that understands spoken language, we need all the facilities of a written language understander as well as enough additional knowledge to handle all the noise and ambiguities of the audio signal" (Rich 1988: 295-296).

20. The title of Marguerite Duras's novel *L'amante anglaise*, where one would look in vain for an English lover, is a deliberate misnomer. It mis-segments and mis-spells what should be, instead, written (presumably) as "La menthe en glaise". On the significance of this clue for understanding the novel, see Chapter 8a. In the light of this striking example, Hofstadter (1986: 589) is certainly right in contending that "translating a novel's *title* may sometimes be the most challenging aspect of translating the whole novel".

21. For a survey and comparative analysis of different models of interpretation, see Chapter 9. For a discussion of the hermeneutic and pragmatic models, see Chapter 29.

22. For a criticism of the IDEOLOGY MACHINE, see Boden (1977: 66-75) and Chapter 25. For an analysis and criticism of Colby's artificial neurosis, see Boden (1977: 21-63). For a criticism of ELIZA, see Boden (1977: 106-111). In general, programs that adopt as the sole basis for interpretation a given (causal) framework fail because they exaggerate the conceptual rigidity they are simulating. Even a stubborn communist and an obsessive neurotic are able, on occasion, to shift to other modes of interpretation. The programs, unable to do so, quickly stumble into stupidity (see Abelson 1975: 274ff.; see also Chapter 3). It should be mentioned that there are some programs that try to go beyond the cryptographic model. For instance, Wilensky's (1981) story-understanding program PAM, which seeks (contextual) explanations for the events described in a story in terms of plans, scripts, and goals of the characters involved. Some of Schank's programs also embed pragmatic characteristics, and his theoretical proposals elaborate upon these (cf. Schank and Kass 1986). Still, the structures embedded in such programs seem to me to be far too rigid to allow for real pragmatic interpretation. It may well be that more recent programs overcome some of these difficulties, through the incorpora-

tion of better sociopragmatic strategies of interpretation. In that case, I would say that they have overcome the limitations of what I have called "AI orthodoxy".

23. Cf. Dascal (1983: 149-152) for details. These steps are presented in a traditional sequential form. With the development of parallel distributed processing or connectionist techniques, it may be possible to implement the processes here described in a non-sequential way. This may eventually require a reorganization of the model.

24. The causal explanations referred to here are to be distinguished from the 'deep structure' causal aspects of content mentioned above. They are intended to be such pedestrian things as current lack of attention, unwillingness to engage in conversation, lack of mastery of the language, etc. that may easily explain why a speaker's utterance cannot be taken, in a given context, at face value. When available, such explanations preempt the need for laborious intentional explanations of such misfits.

25. Try to figure out all the background information that we bring to bear on our understanding of an utterance of a simple sentence such as "The cat is on the mat" (cf. Searle 1978). For further discussion of the problem of explicitness, see Dascal (1983: 85-91).

26. Even in writing there is much 'paralinguistic' information that can provide clues for interpretation (e.g., the fluency, clarity, etc. of the handwriting). These clues are not necessarily absent in written communication with computers either. In this respect, Hofstadter (1986: 522-523) points out the significant differences between: (a) the 'mail' mode, where texts of arbitrary length are put in full in a mailbox; (b) the 'write' mode, where full lines are instantly transmitted when the return key is pressed; and (c) the 'talk' mode, where every keystroke is instantly transmitted. This last mode reveals hesitations, corrections, second thoughts, etc. — which may be crucial in interpretation.

27. For a pragmatic analysis of jokes, see Chapter 16.

28. For further discussion, see Chapter 16. For some examples of the reliance of dreams on literal meaning, see Chapter 26a.

28. The often held view that in dreams messages are 'conveyed' from one layer of personality (or consciousness) to another obviously relies on a notion of 'communication' that is different from the current one, and usually not quite spelled out.

30. According to Freud, when Tartini composed his *Trillo del Diavolo* sonata in a dream, he accomplished an intellectual achievement "due to the same mental forces which produce every similar result during daytime" (Freud 1900: 612). See Chapter 16.

31. For discussion of the 'matching bias' and other examples of the influence of language in reasoning, see Dascal (1987a).

32. Winograd and Flores' exposition is very systematic and clear, and there is no need to gloss it over here. It should be pointed out that they combine the Heideggerian viewpoint with the 'autopoietic' approach to living systems and to cognition, due to Maturana and his associates. This aspect of their work, which in my opinion is related to the 'deep structure' *causal* models of interpretation I mentioned in section 3.2, is not discussed here. Nor do I discuss their criticism of specific AI trends, such as the "fifth generation" project, connectionism, expert systems, etc. (125-139). For my views on expert systems, see Dascal (1989b).

33. For instance: "A problem is created by the linguistic acts in which it is identified and categorized. Of course, some situation is previous to the formulation, but its existence as a particular problem ... is generated by the commitment in language of those who talk about it" (147).

34. "The entity which is held in our fore-having — for instance, the hammer — is proximally ready-to-hand as equipment. If this entity becomes the 'object' of an assertion, then as soon as we begin this assertion, there is already a change-over in the fore-having. Something *ready-to-hand with which* we have to do or perform something turns into something '*about which*' the assertion that points it out is made ... Both *by* and *for* this way of looking at it, the ready-to-hand becomes veiled as ready-to-hand" (Heidegger 1927: 157-158; Engl. transl.: 200).

35. "As regards its possibilities for Articulating reference-relations, it has been cut off from that significance" (Heidegger 1927: 158. Engl. transl.: 200).

36. In my opinion, traditional speech act theory should be rather conceived as a part of semantics. This is no mere classificatory quibble, and it is relevant to the present discussion. The most important point to recall is that speech act categories do not have the flexibility required for accounting for the 'fluid structure' of conversations. See Chapter 24 for details.

Chapter 19

Pragmatics in the digital age

1. Computers and natural language

1.1 Computation and language

Computers have been closely and deeply connected to language and linguistic processing much before the term 'Artificial Intelligence' was first coined, and thus also before any attempts were ever made to write artificial intelligence programs that tackle natural language. In fact, as we now see, computers were inherently connected to language even before there were any computers.

The computer was first conceived as a machine that performs computation. When this machine was first built, its creators were not required to begin their work by articulating clearly and formally what computation is; they could rely on a body of theoretical work put together by mathematical logicians in the first part of the twentieth century. At the heart of this body of work were several exact definitions of what computation consists in; these definitions were proven to be essentially equivalent, and therefore it was famously conjectured (by A. Church, in what is called Church's Thesis) that each of these definitions captures fully our intuitive notion of computation (Shoenfield 1967: 119).

The seemingly most direct way to define computation is through talk of numbers: in everyday speech to compute is to perform certain numerical manipulations. However, not every procedure involving numbers deserves to be called a computation; for example, picking up from any pair of numbers the one that seems to you prettier is not (and should not be defined as) a computation. Addition and multiplication, on the other hand, are computations; similarly, choosing the larger of two numbers is a computation. It is not a trivial problem to generalize these intuitions and say exactly what operations (what functions) on numbers are computations. The solution to this problem is called *the class of recursive functions* — a set of procedures that is clearly defined and that matches our intuitions as regards what a computation is;

however, this solution turns out to be much less direct and intuitively accessible than could be first expected.

Surprisingly enough, the other main ways of defining computation involve in an essential way not numbers, but *languages*. To be exact, these definitions involve formal languages — sets of strings of symbols taken from some finite alphabet. One of these ways relies on the notion of a *formal grammar* — a set of rules according to which strings can be transformed until they reach some final state. A computation can be defined as a procedure that can be carried out by such a set of rules (Lewis and Papadimitriou 1998: 224-232). This way of getting at computation was utilized by Chomsky in his work on natural languages, and we shall return to it presently.

The other, more well known and influential way of defining computation via (formalized) language is through the abstract notion of a Turing machine, named after its originator, A. Turing (Boolos and Jeffrey 1974: 19-33). At any stage along its operation such a (hypothetical) machine can read a symbol off a (similarly hypothetical) tape, and then change the symbol, erase it, or move left or right along the tape — according to the input symbol the machine has just read and its internal state. Such simple, abstract machines can carry out all (and only) computations; that is, a computation can be defined as what a Turing machine can do. In a sense, all existing computers are electronic realizations of Turing machines, and thus they can be rightly described as devices that operate on strings of symbols, i.e., that deal with languages.

We see, then, that from its inception the computer had close ties with languages, albeit formalized, 'syntacticalized' languages.

1.2 Why tackle natural languages computationally?

It could be asked now why would anyone expect computers to deal with *natural* languages. We do not expect other pieces of equipment (such as refrigerators and car engines) to evolve into things that can speak, so why should we have different expectations from a machine that calculates?

The answer to this question is implicit in what was said in the preceding section. As opposed to the refrigerator and the engine, the computer was developed on the basis of a theory that tried to capture a cognitive ability of ours — the ability to compute. The computer performs computation, which is a mental task (again, as opposed to refrigeration and the production of motion); therefore it makes perfectly good sense to ask what cognitive tasks can

be carried out (or modeled) by the computer, i.e., what things that we do in our mind can be reduced (in some sense) to computation, to symbolic manipulation. This question (and the various answers to it) can be justifiably said to be at the center of the development of the computer, from its first construction in the late forties onwards.

What is most special about our minds is that we can *think*: we can reason and conjecture, deduce and induce, make hypotheses and rule them out, and so on. These abilities enable us to understand the world around us and control it according to our needs. Can these tasks be performed (or simulated) by the computer? Well, before this question can be answered, a major point has to be acknowledged and faced. These higher cognitive abilities are intimately related to our ability to use *natural language*: we reason in language, we make inductions and deductions in linguistic terms, and we think about the world around us using language. Therefore in order for the computer to be able to perform these tasks it has first to be taught to deal with natural language, or with a symbolic system as expressive and powerful as natural language. This is one avenue leading to an attempt to reproduce language use on the computer. (Some cognitive scientists hold that we think not in natural language, but rather in a special language of thought; e.g. Fodor (1994). This point need not bother us here, though: the task of teaching the computer the language of thought (Mentalese, in Fodor's terms) would be as formidable as teaching it any natural language.)

Another, maybe more direct avenue that leads in the same direction is this. One of our main higher cognitive abilities is manifested in linguistic communication: people speak to us, and we *understand* what they say. Indeed, we accumulate much of our knowledge of the world around us through listening to speech and reading, i.e., via language, rather than through direct experience. For this reason too language processing would be a natural target for a machine that is supposed to reproduce (or simulate) mental processes.

The last two paragraphs give expression to the following important point: language is central both to *communication* and to *thought*. For this reason the computer is connected to language in two ways — one through thinking, and the other through the understanding of speech. Both capacities (thought and speech processing) are mental, both involve language, and therefore, both capacities require the mastery of language by the computer, if they are to be reproduced by it. We shall return to this point in various forms below.

1.3. Syntax, semantics, pragmatics

Now what is it that we need to teach the computer about natural language? What does our mastery of language consist of? This mastery is usually broken up into three components –syntax, semantics and pragmatics (Morris 1938).

Human *phonological* competence is the capacity to translate auditory input into the syntactic building blocks of language, i.e., words, and, on the other hand, to produce the phonetic representation of linguistic expressions. The first component, our *syntactic* knowledge, consists in our ability to recognize well formed expressions in our language, to segment such expressions according to their grammatical structure, and to produce grammatically correct expressions. These abilities are traditionally characterized as not involving considerations of meaning: a judgment whether a certain string of symbols (communicated to us auditorily or visually) is a legal expression in our language can be made independently of the question, what this expression means (if indeed it is well formed).

The second and third of the components listed above have to do with the meaning of linguistic expressions, not merely with their form. Our *semantic* knowledge is our knowledge of what the expressions in our language mean, plain and simple: what is signified by various words, and what is the meaning of the complex expressions that can be made from these words. In the formation of complex linguistic expressions from more simple ones syntax comes into play, so our semantic knowledge relies on our syntactical knowledge; however, our semantic abilities clearly go beyond syntax.

Our *pragmatic* knowledge too has to do with meaning; it consists in our ability to use meaningful linguistic expressions in the many ways that we do. In order to see better what these ways of use consist of, note how many things we might be doing when we use language, e.g., in making an utterance. We might simply want to inform someone of something, of course, but we might also want to convey an idea metaphorically, to imply a conclusion, to bring an issue into consideration, to frighten, to promise, to warn — and many many more things. All these things take some knowledge to do — knowledge that relies on our knowing the meaning of linguistic expressions, but that goes beyond it. This further kind of knowledge of language is called pragmatic.

Now recall that we ended the previous section by noting that language is used as a vehicle both of thought and of communication. It follows that our pragmatic capacities apply to these two domains, the external and the internal,

and hence we must distinguish between two types of abilities: our Sociopragmatic abilities, having to do with language use in communication, and the Psychopragmatic ones, having to do with how language is used in thought. The respective domains in language research are Sociopragmatics and Psychopragmatics (see Chapters 16 and 18). Consider, for example, the notion of relevance, which is central in contemporary pragmatics (Grice 1975; Sperber and Wilson 1986; Chapter 2). Sociopragmatics is concerned with the important role this notion plays in communication, while Psychopragmatics investigates the equally important (albeit different) role played by relevance relations in cognitive processes. No doubt these two domains are inter-related (e.g., the apparent communicative irrelevance of an utterance in a conversation triggers an abductive search for an interpretation of the utterance that preserves its presumed relevance), and Relevance Theory has emphasized the cognitive underpinnings of communicative relevance. Nevertheless, it is important to distinguish the two domains for a variety of reasons — some of them directly connected to the theme of this paper (see section 1.4 below).

1.4. Successes and failures

So how successful have we been in reproducing on the computer the capacities and abilities described above? In a nutshell, the answer is arguably this: the more we have made progress in understanding any of the human abilities in question, the more successful we have been in simulating these abilities on the machine. Let us elaborate and explain this claim, going through the three categories of linguistic competence listed in the previous section.

a. First and foremost comes syntax, not only because it appears first on the previously given list, but also (and mainly) because (a) linguists have first developed a reasonable understanding of the syntax (rather than semantics) of natural languages, and because (b) the computational treatment of natural language syntax has been first to evolve and also first in its accomplishments so far. Indeed, reason (b) should come as no surprise: we saw in 1.1 that several of the formal representations of the notion of computation take the form of syntactic manipulations on strings of symbols — expressions of formalized languages. Thus, it is not a great leap to hope that the syntactical manipulations that we perform in processing natural language will be close enough to those undergone by formal languages in computation — thereby making

natural language syntax computational, and therefore amenable to reproduction on the computer.

The Chomskian turn in linguistics consists in the fulfillment of this hope, at least to a large degree. Chomsky and his followers have gone a long way in showing that at its core the syntax of all natural languages can be produced by a rather simple kind of computational mechanisms (called Context Free Grammars), enhanced by a plethora of further devices (e.g., transformations), that are computational in character as well (Chomsky 1965). These mechanisms and devices are theoretical entities, like Turing machines; however, according to Chomsky they are realized in our brain, whereas Turing machines are realized by digital computers.

b. This initial success with syntax seemed in the sixties and early seventies to pave the way for similar successes in semantics. (The existence of pragmatics as a distinct body of knowledge [and as an area of research] was not widely acknowledged at the time.) However, before one can begin to aspire for such a success, there is an important point that must be faced. It is quite clear what it is for a computer to reproduce our syntactical abilities, because its own abilities are syntactical in nature. Thus a program that computes the syntax of English would count as adequate if its output on English strings (i.e., English expressions) — e.g., evaluations of grammatical correctness — would be similar to ours. With semantics, on the other hand, things seem to be completely different: we are far from being able to say precisely what it is that we know when we know meaning, and we are not any nearer to being able to say how (if at all) knowledge of meaning can be reproduced on a computer. Indeed, there are those (like Searle) who hold that meaning and computers are inherently divorced: according to Searle (1984), a merely computational process that is executed by a computer does not (and cannot) have any semantic aspect to it.

There is a way to get around this problem, at least in part. Our semantic capacities have *symbolic manifestations*; that is, the semantic processing that we perform can be described as beginning and ending with English expressions, construed as mere syntactical entities. Therefore a purely syntactic process within the computer could be said to represent (in some sense) our own semantic capacities, if its output on some input would be similar to ours (on the same input). This way we can put aside the deep philosophical and scientific questions about meaning and thought, and still deal (albeit indirectly) with semantics. Let us give two paramount examples of this strategy.

The first example is that of *inference*. For any two sentences it could be asked whether the second can be inferred from the first. (More generally, for any set of sentences A and a further sentence S it can be asked if S can be inferred when the sentences in A are taken as premises.) The answer to this question certainly has to do with the meaning of the sentences in question, not with their grammar alone; thus inference is a semantic notion. However, the two sentences can be looked at also merely as strings of symbols that could be the input and output of a computer program, and therefore it can be coherently asked if the computer can mimic our inference processes, i.e., whether for any pair of English sentences the computer would say that the second follows from the first exactly when we would say so too. Indeed, for some relatively simple formalized languages the answer to this question has proven to be positive: for such languages there are purely syntactical procedures that are in complete accord with our semantic intuitions as regards inference relations among sentences.

The second example is *translation*. For any sentence from a given language it can be asked what its correct translation into another language is. As in the previous example, this question is semantic — it has to do with what the sentence from the first language means — but it too has a purely syntactic counterpart: it can be asked whether a computer program can be written that mimics translation, i.e., that given an input string from the first language produces an output string from the second language that is a correct translation of the input — correct according to our semantic intuitions.

Having pointed out concrete, coherent questions about our ability to reproduce (albeit indirectly) semantic knowledge on the computer, we can turn to consider their answers. Roughly put, the answer to both is this: «We have made some progress (in the computerized reproduction of inference and translation), but not as much as we had hoped for; we have not been successful yet, and we are much less sure than before that success is forthcoming». The reason for this state of affairs is that the logical and semantic analysis of natural language that is required for the two tasks described above has proven to be much more difficult than first thought. For example, many *logical constructions* in natural language have been found to be beyond the scope of well known and well behaved formal logical mechanisms (Barwise and Cooper 1981); also, *vagueness* is a natural language phenomenon that is very hard to deal with (Kamp 1981; van Deemter and Peters 1996). Progress on these fronts has been made, but it is not as rapid as was hoped for thirty years ago.

Furthermore, the analysis of the semantic structure of the lexicon has proven to be a formidable task (Jackendoff 1983, 1987; Pustejovsky 1993). As these and other authors have argued, lexical semantics is inherently tied to perceptual and conceptual structures, and therefore a systematic (and, hopefully, computational) description of the lexicon can be provided only within the scope of a broad theory of cognitive psychology.

c. Progress on the pragmatic front is even slower and harder than in semantics, mostly because our understanding of human pragmatic capacities is still in its cradle. When we consider the reproduction of pragmatic abilities on the computer we encounter the same problem described above with respect to semantics: it is not at all clear what our doing the various things that we do with language exactly amounts to, and therefore it is not clear when a computer would count as doing these things. This problem can be circumvented in the case of pragmatics as it is in semantics: we satisfy ourselves in trying to create on the computer syntactic processes that will have outputs that match those of our own cognitive processes. Here are two examples, two domains of AI research that consist in attempts to reproduce human pragmatic capacities on the computer. These examples can be described as respectively belonging to the two domains of pragmatics defined in 2.3 — Psychopragmatics and Sociopragmatics — and in both of them progress has all but bogged down so far, much before success could be announced.

The first domain is that of *expert systems*: computer programs that are supposed to reproduce human *reasoning* in solving problems from some restricted domain. (Reasoning includes deduction, i.e., logical inference, but goes much beyond it; therefore our claim here that reasoning in language is part of pragmatics is consistent with the claim [made above] that inference is essentially a semantic capacity.) A program of this kind has a knowledge base, in which a body of relevant data is stored; usually these data are represented in some formal language, i.e., in a way that approximates our own linguistic representation of the same data. Given a problem from the domain in question the program reasons (syntactically) on the basis of the data that it has, and comes up with an answer.

Expert systems had some initial successes in dealing with some very narrow domains; a famous example is that of MYCIN (Charniak and McDermott 1985: 465-468), an expert system that diagnoses quite well what type of blood infection a patient suffers from, on the basis of laboratory tests that the patient undergoes. (The knowledge base of the program consists of a list of

rules employed by human experts.) However, attempts to tackle somewhat wider and more complex domains of human reasoning ended with failure: the programs could not approximate (and certainly not improve) normal human reasoning capacities. It is not agreed upon what the exact reasons of this failure are (and what the prospects are for overcoming them), but arguably some of these reasons have to do with our only taking the first steps in Psychopragmatics, i.e., with our lack of ability to articulate what human methods of using language in reasoning are (see also Dascal 1989b).

The second domain of AI research we consider can be said to originate from A. Turing's so called imitation game, which became known as the Turing Test (Turing 1950). In this test a computer is supposed to simulate the human ability to make conversation, and this to the degree that an interlocutor whose aim is to find out whether he is communicating (in writing) with a computer or with a human will not be able to do so. (The computer will pass the test if often enough it will be mistaken by an interlocutor for a human being.) Turing thought that once a computer passed this test it will count as intelligent, but his interpretation of the test need not concern us here; what is important for us is that the test requires from the computer to display pragmatic abilities: in order for the computer to pass the test it would have to be able, e.g., to make (and understand) implications, understatements, ironic gestures, threats, promises and so on.

Turing was sure that by now (i.e., by 1999) computers would pass his test. This is not because he was optimistic about our ability to analyze human pragmatic abilities and reproduce them computationally; rather, to a large degree Turing was unaware of these abilities' existence. In fact, we now know that we are very far from being able to construct a machine (i.e., to write a program) that passes the Turing Test; what may seem as substantial steps towards reaching this goal, e.g., the well known program ELIZA, that simulates a psychotherapeutic interview, are in fact nothing of the kind. (Those who mistake ELIZA for a human psychotherapist do *not* aim during the interaction with the program to find out whether it is a program or a human being. Therefore, the program cannot be said to have passed the Turing Test, even if some people interact with it without being aware that it is a computer program and not a human being.) As in the previous example, the reason for this shortcoming is to a large degree the great need that we have to make progress in pragmatic research (this time in Sociopragmatics): until we understand better the working rules according to which we use language in commu-

nications, the chances of making the computer mimic us are slim (see also Chapter 18).

d. The situation in phonology is somewhat similar to the above described state of affairs in semantics and pragmatics (see Dreyfus 1992). That is, there have been several initial successes in the domain of artificial voice recognition, and slow progress has been made ever since. However, the optimistic predictions made a few decades ago, to the effect that we would have by now computerized agents that can match human phonological capacities, have failed. Humans can recognize with practically no errors expressions uttered by different speakers in widely different contexts, while computer programs are so far much more limited: they are often capable of recognizing only the voice of a specific speaker in favorable circumstances. Part of the reason for this gap between man and machine in what could be naively thought of as a straightforward task may be this: human phonological performance relies substantially on semantic and pragmatic co-textual and contextual considerations, and hence the above described limitations on the computational simulation of such considerations hinders the computer also in what one might thing to be the more menial phonogogical tasks.

In an attempt to overcome this and other obstacles to human-computer communication, some researchers have been developing computerized agents that do not rely only on language (written or oral) but also on the production and perception of visual and other bodily signals (cf. Cassell et al. 2000). Although enthusiasm for the first achievements of these "Embodied Communicative Agents" is contagious, it remains to be seen whether the story of initial successes followed by very slow progress that we have observed in syntax, semantics, pragmatics, and voice recognition, will not repeat itself in this new front too.

2. The digital information age and natural language processing

2.1 Computers, communication, and the information age

Since the mid-eighties the uses that computers are put to and our expectations from them have undergone a significant shift. Admittedly, computers are still used for number crunching in physics laboratories and in banks, and so called classic AI research still goes on, albeit more realistically. However, a host of new uses of the computer are now given a leading role: computers everywhere

on the globe are used for the storage, presentation, transformation and transmission of *information*. All major types of information text, picture and sound, have proved to be amenable to digitization, and thus open to computational processing. This fact has important ramifications for the use of computers in the handling of information and its communication.

First, there is the simple issue of storage capacity. Ever bigger quantities of digital information can be stored on increasingly smaller devices, and thus people can have in their laptops complete encyclopedias, or complete galleries of pictures.

Second, the interface between humans and the computer, once of minor interest, is becoming a point of central concern. Information is presented now by the computer graphically, acoustically, and through Virtual Reality technology (the recreation of three dimensional reality on the computer screen); this is made possible by the growth in the storage capacities and computation speed of computers. Similarly, the cues that the computer can take from its human users are getting more and more diverse.

Third, as data are represented by the computer digitally they can undergo all kinds of manipulations and transformations: they are malleable as never before. One major consequence of this new malleability of information is the introduction of *multimedia*, whose underlying idea is this: if textual, visual and auditory information are stored and processed by the computer in similar ways (i.e., digitally), then the traditional barriers separating these media fall down, and one can mesh them together. Multimedia documents are bodies of information in which such meshing together is carried out (in ways that are richer and more complex than what is done in illustrated books or subtitled films, which are primitive multimedia documents).

Finally (and probably most importantly), the digital clothing of information opens up new ways for its communication, the foremost of which is the Internet. The Internet includes the World Wide Web, a network consisting of a huge number of information sources (servers) which anyone can log in into and browse through on-line; also, the Internet enables direct contact among any number of people, e.g., according to their common interests. The existence of a network of such unprecedented complexity is made possible through the digital tagging of every node of the network (be it an information source or a browser), as well as every piece of information moving through it, and by tracking and handling all this symbolic transport (on the

basis of its tags) through the use of computational resources that are distributed over the network.

The Internet incorporates within it the mass media, the telephone and the marketplace: anyone who uses it can address all kinds of groups of people, from a single person anywhere on the globe to the whole network. Due to this power the Internet has important ramifications to all domains of human life, such as the economy, education, and politics. Indeed, because so much interpersonal interaction can take place on it, the Internet is commonly viewed as creating a new space — Cyberspace — in which a great part of human life can go on.

2.2 Natural language and the computer as an agent, a tool, and an environment

What are the implications of these developments in computer technology for the attempts to reproduce natural language processing on the computer? Are these attempts directly relevant to the role of the computer in the information age, or is computerized natural language processing expected to be of declining interest in this age? At first blush it would seem as if the latter of these two options — that of declining interest in computerized linguistic processing — must hold. In order to see why, let us consider the developments described in the previous section in a slightly different light, using some old fashioned, non-technical terminology.

We humans view ourselves as *agents*. That is, we are creatures that have a will, and who act upon their desires; we are active. Our actions take place in a passive *environment*, to which we do not ascribe agency: we do not think of the inanimate objects in the world around us as having a will, and as having desires that are acted upon; rather, these objects are viewed by us as passive entities, behaving according to preestablished regularities. In between our active selves and the passive environment are located our *tools* — parts of the environment that we use in order to advance our goals and to carry out our actions. Tools themselves are passive, but their being used by active agents for some purpose is constitutive of their being tools.

These three terms — agent, environment and tool — can be now used to mark distinct stages in the evolution of our view of the computer, and (consequently) of our using it. Roughly speaking, we (humans) started our acquaintance with the computer by thinking of it as an *agent*, then moved to thinking

of it as a *tool*, and are now on the verge of viewing it as underlying a new *environment*. Here is, briefly, why.

The first part of the claim is supported and substantiated by the content of the first section of this paper. The computer was described there as a machine that carries out computations — something that we, as active agents, do. The AI attempts to reproduce various of our cognitive abilities on the computer are in the same vein; underlying them is the view of the computer as a mechanized agent. This agent may be programmed to help us with some things that we wish to accomplish, but it (the computer) would help us like an agent — a friend, maybe, or a slave: it is given a task, and it is supposed to return with the result. This is how batch programming (as opposed to interactive programming) works: the computer is given some input, and is then left to its own devices, so to speak, in coming up with the right output. Also, the work on robots, that goes hand in hand with AI research, embodies (literally) this approach to computers.

The second conception is that of the computer as a tool. This conception evolved with the development of graphic interactive programming — computer programs that are constantly used during a certain process, and that therefore do not have a clear-cut beginning and end to their execution. Word processors are typical examples of such programs, and so are CAD/CAM programs — programs for computer aided design and manufacturing. These programs are indeed used like tools are, and the (heavy) computations they perform have little or nothing to do with the simulation of cognition. For example, consider the difference between the use of an AI program in the design of some building or machine, and the use of a tool-like program in the performance of such a task. An AI program would simulate some of the considerations of the designer, while a CAD (tool-like) program would simply help the designer make these considerations on his own, e.g., by presenting to him visually the various options that he must choose from at each stage of the designing process.

Finally, the evolving uses of the computer in communications — especially the Internet — lead us towards viewing the computer not as an agent or a tool, but rather as underlying an environment in which human interaction takes place. Admittedly, we use the computer in communications as a *tool*, like the pen or the telephone, but as this tool develops and encompasses an ever growing part of our activities, a change of perspective takes place: we turn to view ourselves as communicating with each other *through* a medium that is

put in place by computing processes, as we communicate through ordinary three dimensional space. This change of perspective is most evident in the term 'Cyberspace', but it is not merely a matter of terminology. Rather, the evolution of the computer from a tool into an environment witnesses the sharp increase in its importance to our lives; this was the case for the book, the building and the road, that are viewed by us as parts of our environment, and it is also the case for the computer network. (This view of the computer can be said to have been anticipated by Heidegger, and to some extent by Wittgenstein, who thought of *language* as an environment: the former in claiming that language is 'the house of being', and the latter in establishing a close connection between 'language games' and 'forms of life'. In fact, natural language might be viewed, in addition to an *environment* of thought, as a cognitive *resource* and as a *tool*; although it is certainly not as an *agent* as such, the capacity to *use* it may turn out to be essential for any device comparable to human agents. See Dascal 2002.)

The way all this is relevant to the question we started with should be clear. The transformation just described in the way we view the computer should *diminish* our interest in computerized natural language processing, because linguistic capabilities are something that is required from an agent, not from a tool, and certainly not from an environment. If we talk with each other *through* the computer, so to speak, and not *to* it, then the computer need not have any speech processing abilities.

A look at the early literature concerned with the Internet and other information technologies reveals that indeed there is surprisingly little concern in it with natural language processing issues in particular, and with AI in general. The new cycle of computer technology is seldom viewed by its leaders and prophets as a continuation of the previous, computer-as-agent cycle; rather, it is quite often presented by these leaders and prophets as a step in a new direction.

Is there indeed such lack of dependence between the different cycles of computer technology? Is the information age in no need of research into human natural language processing, and does it not depend in any way on the implementation of the fruit of such research computationally? In the next section we see that this is not the case.

2.3 Natural language processing in the information age

We turn now to three examples of the way in which information technology does, in fact, depend on natural language processing. These examples prove the assessment presented in the previous section to be misguided, and after going through the three of them we conclude by stating why this assessment is indeed wrong.

a. *Semantic Search*. The Internet makes available to us huge quantities of information, stores of data much bigger than anything we have ever seen before. Now these seas of data can be of use to us only if we can fish from them information that is relevant to our needs and interests; having useful information at the tips of our fingers is of no great significance if this information is buried under an avalanche of useless data.

But can we easily find our way in Cyberspace and fish for relevant information? Well, we humans cannot. It is beyond human powers to go through millions of Web sites, for example, and see if their content bears upon a certain subject matter. (Note that this contrasts with our ability to take in through our senses huge quantities of data about the world around us, and then pick out at any given moment what is important for us.) So, does the Internet consist in a flood of useless information? No, it does not. As anyone who has used the Internet knows, there are computer programs, called Search Engines, that go through Cyberspace for us, and return to our screens with information on the topics we want to look into. Give a search engine such as Altavista or Yahoo the input string 'San Francisco', for example, and these programs will find for you (i.e., give you the addresses of) files of information on that beautiful city (as well as on equally named things).

Note now the following important point: almost all existing search programs are essentially *syntactic*. That is, when a search engine is given some string of symbols as input, it simply looks for that string (inside some Web sites, or in Web sites' names, or in some previously compiled directory); the engine does not take into account any semantic aspects of the string in question. We humans, on the other hand, definitely do take into account meaning when we look for information that is relevant to a certain topic.

Relevance is a semantic notion, and therefore relevance connections among linguistic expressions clearly depend on what these expressions mean. Therefore what search engines do is essentially different from what we humans do when we search for information, e.g., when we go to the library, ask

our friends, or 'go through' our own memory: we appeal to semantics while current search engines do not. (Note that we too definitely use syntax, e.g., when we look for a word in the dictionary; however, we are not limited to the level of syntax.) This difference between the two modes of search gives ample reason to think that computerized syntactic search will not be able to match its semantic human counterpart, unless it is coupled with semantic abilities.

As a concrete example, consider how in a hypothetical search for information about *San Francisco* one that takes into account semantics. For a start, note that 'San Francisco' is a name of a place, as opposed to 'Socrates' or 'Communism'; therefore, looking for San Francisco's location in an *atlas* or a *map* makes sense (as opposed to looking for Socrates or Communism in these information sources). As a place San Francisco has its weather, which could be looked up in *weather* information; Socrates and Communism, on the other hand, do not have weather. San Francisco is a place of a specific kind — it is a city; therefore it has streets, which could be looked up in a *street map*, and buildings, which could be the subject matter, e.g., of information sources on *architecture*. Furthermore, as an American city San Francisco's history is part of *American history*; within the city's history, for example, there should be room for the *gold rush* era and the erection of the *Golden Gate Bridge*. These semantic connections can be tracked further and further, but the point should be clear: the links among the italicized strings in this paragraph ('San Francisco', 'atlas', 'map', 'weather', 'street', 'architecture', 'American history', 'gold rush' and 'Golden Gate Bridge') are links of meaning, and therefore only a search process that takes meaning into account can trace them and follow them.

The upshot of the previous two paragraphs is this. Naïve, syntactic search for information (in the Internet, as well as other media) cannot reproduce the results of the semantic procedure that we humans perform. Therefore if we stick with syntactic search methods we shall most probably fall short of fully tapping the resources that information technology makes available to us. If, on the other hand, we make progress in understanding human semantic processing and in reproducing them on the computer, then we stand a better chance to fish successfully in the newly established seas of digital information (see also Cheng and Wilensky 1997).

Let us quickly address two objections to this conclusion. One is that the example given above (concerning San Francisco) does not show in a convincing way that semantic considerations are indeed required in information

search. It could be argued that a mere syntactic search for the string 'San Francisco' will surely bring forth an information file on the city, such as an encyclopedia entry, in which all the above mentioned semantic connections have been made (connections concerning, e.g., location, weather, and history); therefore the search program itself need not reproduce these connections.

The answer to this objection is twofold. First, in the case of the city of San Francisco the computerized search may indeed piggyback on previously done human work (in which semantics was obviously taken into account). However, this is not the case as regards places that are not touristic destinations, and even less so as regards other things and concepts. In the general case no ongoing human information accumulation is performed, and therefore there is no replacement for the computer's being able to make such semantic connections as that between the notion of a place and maps or atlases (as information sources).

Second, and more interestingly, the kinds of information search that will be called for in the information age are extremely complex, user specific, and transitory in character, and for such kinds of search the 'encyclopedia entry' option envisioned by the objection simply does not exist. For example, consider a personalized program that is supposed to survey for me various television channels and information sources on the Internet and put together a daily bulletin of news that matches my own idiosyncratic needs and interests at any given time. Clearly, such a program (or an *agent*, as these programs are often called) will not be able to rely on previously compiled bodies of data; they will have to make semantic relevance considerations on their own.

A second objection to our conclusion is this. In order for the computer to make semantic considerations it has to go beyond syntax; but it cannot; all it is capable of is syntactic manipulation. (Searle has forcefully argued to this effect, on the basis of his Chinese Room *gedankenexperiment*.) Semantic search is beyond the scope of the computer's ability, and therefore the suggested computerized semantic search is a contradiction in terms.

The answer to this objection has already been given in the first section of this paper. We can put aside the deep philosophical and scientific issues that semantics brings forth, and aim at simulating computationally (i.e., syntactically) processes that are inherently semantic for us humans. Thus, it is sufficient for us that the computer would be able to fish for us syntactical objects (i.e., digital information files) that *we* would judge as relevant to our interests;

we need not bother with the question whether the computer does or does not understand what it has done and what it came up with. (See 1.4 clause (b) above for further elaboration of this answer.)

b. *Data Mining*. Having dealt with an example from semantics in some length, let us merely point out two further examples, from the domain of pragmatics.

First, an example from Psychopragmatics — the use of language in thought. Notice that in the previous clause we have considered merely the *search* for information that is relevant to some topic; we have not said anything regarding what is supposed to be done with the information that has been found. Now, information is usually supposed to help us reach conclusions, in the form, e.g., of practical decisions and scientific hypotheses. Therefore the following question can now be asked: Can we humans make use of the information that will be available to us in the digital age, even if the information that is relevant to our needs is brought before us? That is, can we reach reasonable conclusions on the basis of this information?

As in the previous discussion, the answer to these question seems to be negative, at least in part. The rapid growth of accessible information leads to a similar growth in the number of cases in which information analysis is required, and also to a growth in the magnitude of the body of information that has to be dealt with in each such case. Human capacities are simply not sufficient for such data processing.

As in the previous discussion, the desirable solution is to reproduce our conclusion-making abilities computationally. The area of computer research in which such reproduction is attempted is called Data Mining — the computerized processing of raw data and the extraction of knowledge from them, in the form, e.g., of hypotheses or decisions. Much of the data that Data Mining is concerned with are formulated linguistically, and therefore progress in this area depends to a large degree on our having better understanding of how we humans use language in thinking — i.e., on progress in Psychopragmatics. (There is growing awareness of the dependence of computerized thought simulation on linguistic processing, even outside the academic ivory tower. See Chapter 18 for an advertisement that exemplifies this.)

c. *Human-Computer Interface*. Finally, we get to Sociopragmatics — the use of language in communication. The main way such language use arises in the information age is, in a nutshell, this: the more elaborate and flexible the uses we want to put the computer to are, the greater our need to communicate

with it in our own natural means of communication, i.e., in natural language. Here is why.

We have seen that in the information age there will be a growing use of the computer as a medium of communication with other people, and as a flexible means of access to various kinds of information. For example, we are soon expected to use the computer to contact our friends, our bank, and the supermarket, and to get through it political news on the issues that matter to us, economic news that concern our interests, and maybe gossip having to do with our favorite celebrities. In order to get all this from the computer we must constantly program it — we must tell it what to do. Using anything but our own natural language (or some close approximation of it) for this purpose will be neither practical nor wise, for it would involve translating our natural language utterances, which are often syntactically deviant and incomplete, into precise and univocal formulae, designed with a limited number of purposes and domains in mind. Thanks to the flexibility permitted by sociopragmatic principles of communication, we are able to convey our intentions and understand those of our interlocutors without undertaking such a painstaking translation task, and without submitting to the artificial constraints of pre-formalization. Except for a few (albeit important) domains, formal languages have been of remarkably little use in communication: hundreds of artificial languages have been devised for this purpose, and none has managed to establish itself in any significant way (Eco 1995).

We need our computers to be competent natural language speakers, then, and hence the study of Sociopragmatics and the computational simulation of human pragmatic abilities turn out to be of major importance for the development of information technology too.

* * *

It is natural to ask now the following question: how can the last two sections be reconciled? According to the analysis presented in 2.2 the role of computerized natural language processing is expected to decline in the information age, and yet in 2.3 there has been presented ample proof that this does not fit the needs created by the information age. So where, exactly, do the observations in 2.2 go wrong? We conclude by answering this question, using one of the major notions introduced in 2.2., i.e., that of agency.

As said in 2.2, the computer evolved during the past few decades from a would-be agent into a machine that underlies a new environment. Now it

turns out that this new environment is different in various ways from the one we are used to, and that therefore it is not as easy as expected for us to accomplish in it what we want to — e.g., to gather and use information. It is for this reason that computerized agency reappears. In the information age we need computerized agents, but not in order to act on our behalf in the real world, for which purpose we are well adapted; rather, we need them for the purpose of representing us in Cyberspace, which in some ways is alien to us, as we need the Mars Explorer to represent us on Mars.

Together with the resurrection of computerized agency we find again need for computerized linguistic processing. Our emissaries in Cyberspace must perform (simulated) reasoning and they must be communicated with, and for these two reasons they must be endowed with linguistic abilities that go well beyond standard syntactic abilities.

Chapter 20

Interpretation and tolerance

My main objective in this essay is to provide an additional argument — a new one, as far as I know — on behalf of tolerance. This argument is based on recent results in the philosophy of language and pragmatics. I will begin with an interpretive exercise concerning the term 'tolerance'. It will serve not only as a means to elucidate the principle of tolerance, but also to illustrate the kind of considerations that form the basis for the argument I will present on behalf of this principle. I will conclude by indicating other possible applications of such considerations. The discussion will be confined to tolerance regarding the expression of opinions — i.e., to the so-called "freedom of expression" — although its implications go far beyond.

The meaning of 'tolerance'

Etymology may sometimes be useful. In Latin, the verb *tolerare* means to hold, to sustain, to serve as a support of something. It refers, for instance, to the weight a bridge can support without breaking down. But this verb in Latin does not have the connotation of passivity — of "suffering" or "endurance" — it acquired later in other languages. The bridge supports a weight because it upholds it. *Tolerare* and *tulli* share the same root, which means to raise; i.e., both denote an activity. This is why Spinoza, who considered passivity the opposite of virtue, was able to consider tolerance a virtue. Nevertheless, the "negative" interpretation of the term, which emphasizes passivity, tended to prevail in many languages, thereby linking tolerance with endurance. For example, one speaks of the tolerance or toleration of pain or of the limits of tolerance of a measurement (the margin of error admitted). To be tolerant thus became synonymous with being ready to suffer that which does not seem to one correct or acceptable, be it due to a sense of justice or simply because one cannot do otherwise.

The modern philosophical history of the concept of tolerance reflects the

oscillations between the positive and negative connotations associated with the term.

John Locke — one of the first philosophers to defend political tolerance in matters of religion — based his argument, among other things, on the separation of powers. He argued that the civil government has no right to interfere in the spiritual life of the citizens. The government must display "indifference" towards the citizens' religious beliefs, unless such beliefs manifest themselves in actions that are contrary to the social contract. As long as this does not happen, one must "tolerate" any religious belief. This does not mean, for him, unrestricted permissiveness, however. For example, support for the Pope (i.e., "Papism") should be forbidden, for the papists justify the intervention of a foreign power in the internal affairs of certain states. He also held that atheism should be prohibited, since the belief in God is necessary for the obedience to certain "natural" laws and for the proper functioning of society.[1] In both cases, Locke's justification for allowing the violation of the principle of tolerance regarding religious beliefs consisted in the alleged deleterious effects the latter had on government and civil society. As long as no such justification is available, Locke is in favor of absolute tolerance in matters of religious belief. This is quite remarkable, given that in the 17th century hardly anyone in the Christian world raised doubts about the truthfulness of the Christian religion. For Locke himself, there was no doubt whatsoever that there is one and only one divine law, which is universal and expresses the only true religion (Locke 1965: Book II, Chapter 28, paragraph 8). In spite of such a certainty, the civil government is not entitled to impose upon the citizens such a true religion. It must rather tolerate not only "different" religions (and *a fortiori* "different" ideas) but even such as it is persuaded are false — in so far as they do not lead to social damage.

In spite of its liberality, such a conception of religious tolerance implicitly contains a strong paternalistic motive, which characterizes also the arguments of one of the best known and most tenacious defenders of tolerance in general, John Stuart Mill. For instance, referring to the Mormons, Mill expresses his despise towards the "alleged new revelation" and the "palpable imposture" that form the basis of their religion. He also considers this religion manifestly inferior to "other and better" ones, and strongly disapproves the practice of polygamy allowed by the Mormons. Nevertheless, he condemns their persecution, and defends their right to live as they wish in the remote and inhospitable place they transformed in a habitable region — as long as they do not

commit acts of aggression against other nations and allow free movement to anyone wishing to leave their territory (Mill 1939: 1021-1022). That is to say, the "civilized" world must be tolerant even towards customs and beliefs that it considers undoubtedly wrong, in so far as they are freely adopted by a group of persons that do not employ violence in order to impose them.[2]

I agree with Mill's conclusion, of course, but I believe it is possible — and even necessary — to justify it differently. No longer by presenting tolerance as arrogantly "permitting" the existence of "strange" and "obviously wrong" opinions. No longer by placing oneself in the position of someone who, knowing the truth (or what is closest to the truth), is willing to admit that the other is entitled to hold a false belief provided it does not harm society. But rather saying: "I do not hold a monopoly on the truth or on morality, and therefore I must respect ideas different of my own, for they can be as true and moral as mine". In this way, tolerance ceases to be a *minimalist* principle that tolerates error from a position of superiority of he who is "enlightened", and becomes a *maximalist* principle which acknowledges the possibility that the "tolerated" is perhaps right, so that his ideas deserve *respect* and not only paternal *patience*.

As a matter of fact, Mill's main argument for the freedom of expression, which is based on the principle of the fallibility of our knowledge, allows one to interpret tolerance in the positive form just described. Since we cannot be sure that a given theory or proposition is true and that its competitors are false, the truth can be hidden precisely in the most "strange" — and hence less accepted — theory or opinion. Or at least part of the truth, since no theory — not even the most accepted and best justified — is likely to contain the whole truth.[3] Therefore, we not only have the obligation to "tolerate" the existence of generally unaccepted ideas and to allow for its expression. Society's interest requires also to foster their proliferation, in order to permit as wide as possible a "coverage" of the truth, just as the biological-evolutionary interest of life is to preserve the richest possible genetic pool.

Although the above argument refers to the possibility that the "unusual" idea contains some truth, such an idea is still described in it as "unusual" (i.e., presumably false), and the argument consists in an attempt to persuade the majority (i.e., the dominant view) to tolerate that which it perceives as quite unlikely to be true. The majority is not required to respect the unusual opinion because it contains *de facto* any truth or value *per se*, independently of the majority's interests, i.e., as having a right on its own (rather than "derived") to

exist. The unusual is tolerated because it *potentially* contains some truth (although the probability that this be the case is negligible), and its tolerance is ultimately subordinated to the majority's interest. Thus, the point of view of those who hold the unusual view is not in fact taken into account. The latter, believing they are right, have no interest whatsoever in being merely tolerated in this sense.

The fallibility principle as such is therefore ambivalent regarding the adoption of a positive posture vis-à-vis tolerance. In order to fully justify such a posture, other principles are required. For example, the eclectic principle, according to which the truth *cannot* in principle be encompassed by any one theory or point of view, being rather distributed across different theories and points of view — which entails that it can only be "found" through the full consideration of the ensemble of theories or points of view, both the extant and the possible ones. In this principle we may find a more categorical justification of "positive" tolerance. Contrary to what is generally thought, it does not lead to relativism, but rather to true pluralism. Each point of view about the universe is *necessarily* partial (William James); hence, the diverse opinions complement each other in order to produce the general picture (Leibniz). A concrete example of the interpretation of the concept of tolerance according to the eclectic principle, which strongly impressed several western thinkers, is the relation of *complementation* and *mutual acceptance* that holds between the three main religions of Japan — Shintoism, Buddhism and Confucianism. They do not tolerate each other because they are unable to actually dominate the others, but because they acknowledge the value and specific function of each other.

The importance of the issue of interpreting and grounding tolerance is much more than merely theoretical. There is an important practical argument against the minimalist interpretation: If to tolerate means to accept the existence of that which cannot be suppressed, the tolerant, as soon as the conditions permit him to suppress that which seems to him wrong, will do it, thus becoming *ipso facto* intolerant. Only if tolerance has its own positive value and grounding, such an outcome is likely to be avoided.

Critical rationalism and tolerance

Can we find a proper philosophical grounding for positive tolerance in Popper's critical rationalism, which combines the fallibility principle with the critical principle, seeing in this blend the basis of the critical tradition of the "open society"?

Popper's critical rationalism highlights the conjectural character of scientific knowledge. Every theory — even the most justified and accepted according to extant criteria of justification — is nothing but a hypothesis, liable to be refuted by new data. In spite of this, scientific knowledge "grows", in the sense that it constantly gets closer to truth, even though one can never be sure that truth has been reached. Two are the aspects of scientific activity jointly and equally responsible for scientific progress, according to Popper. The first is the scientists' capacity to generate new and audacious hypotheses. Unlike Mill, Popper does not believe in the existence of an "inductive method" capable to lead to generalizations, i.e., to theories, on the basis of the collection and comparison of data. For Popper, the generation of a new hypothesis is a creative act *par excellence*, which cannot be controlled by a set of methodical rules. From this point of view, the freedom of creation in the "context of discovery" must be, for him, complete and unrestricted. Evidently, such a conception grants tolerance a positive and essential role in the progress of science, since it contends that no hypothesis should be eliminated *a priori*, no matter how far-fetched it may seem to be. On the contrary, an open and tolerant environment, capable of stimulating the appearance of a great quantity of varied hypotheses, is a *sine qua non* for allowing scientific research to yield the growth of knowledge.

The second essential component of scientific activity has to do with the filtering of hypotheses or the "context of justification". In order to be "accepted", a hypothesis or theory must undergo rigorous criticism. Unlike the positivists, Popper does not believe that acceptability depends upon a high "degree of confirmation". Rather, it depends upon resisting serious attempts to refute the theory. Legions of scientists literally besiege and attack the new hypothesis, anxious to refute it. If any of them succeeds, the career of the hypothesis comes to an end. In the "context of justification" — which in the Popperian framework ought better to be called "context of testing" — there is no room for lenience. To continue to tolerate a theory that has been empirically refuted is absolutely contrary to the spirit of Popperian science. For,

refutation is grounded on the *logical*, i.e., entirely objective conflict between the theory's hypotheses and empirical observation, and the latter should always prevail. This test is so fundamental for Popper that it becomes a criterion not only for the acceptance of a theory but also for its very scientificity. If a theory is such that, in principle, no observational results can refute it, it must be considered as "devoid of empirical content", which means that it should be excluded from the exclusive club of *scientific* theories.

The contrast between these two factors and the two "contexts" they govern is remarkable. On the one hand, tolerance and unlimited openness; on the other, well defined critical criteria that allow for the pitiless elimination of theories that do not satisfy them. The dialectical interplay between openness and decision, tolerance and uncompromising critique, is what ensures, according to Popper, scientific progress and characterizes in fact rationality itself.

If we now turn to the area of social, ethical and political questions, what has Popper's critical rationalism to offer? The gist of its claims in this area, especially of those directly relevant for the purposes of this paper, comprises both a methodological critique of certain politically relevant kinds of social science and history and an ethical critique of the political doctrines based on them.[4] Methodologically, the social and historical theories must be judged by the same standards as their natural counterparts, for the principle of the unity of scientific method must be respected, according to Popper. Yet, the theories he criticizes fail in this respect for a number of reasons: they systematically violate the principle of *methodological individualism* by offering explanations in terms of "abstract" entities (e.g., "nation", "state", "class", "people") without cashing them out in the corresponding states and actions of individuals; they tend to be *encompassing* or *holistic* accounts of socio-historical processes, thus overlooking the fact that wholes, in the sense of the "totality of properties of a thing" cannot be scientifically (or otherwise) studied because any description of a thing — be it small or big — is necessarily selective. As a result of their holism, instead of providing exact, observationally testable *predictions*, these theories in fact indulge in *prophesying*, i.e., issuing large scale forecasts of the course of events, which can be hardly observed and thereby tested. For these and other reasons, such theories are not, in principle, falsifiable; hence, they cannot be properly considered to be "scientific". Ethically, social undertakings of major proportions (e.g., political revolutions), which are usually based on holistic socio-historical theories, in all likelihood have unintended conse-

quences that cause suffering to a large number of persons. Politically, the alleged efficacy of such undertakings requires complete control of all their aspects, so that to the holism of their theoretical underpinnings corresponds a totalitarian concentration of political power, obviously contrary to the democratic political structure of the "open society". For all these reasons, one has to abstain from major social undertakings of this kind, and content oneself with limited actions that provide solutions for well-defined social problems, thus opting for "piecemeal social engineering" rather than "utopian engineering".

Instead of the audacity and unlimited creative imagination he recommends in the natural sciences, in the social field what Popper proposes is a lot of caution and a large dose of conservatism. The tolerance granted to theory formation and corresponding action in the social domain is thus *a priori* severely restricted. Furthermore, Popper admits the existence of certain preferential values and norms (such as the principle of minimization of human suffering and the set of liberal values that define the "open society") that restrict even further the space of admissible social theories and action. Any proposal for social action contrary to such norms is for Popper equated with an attempt to return to an earlier and inferior kind of society, the "closed" or tribal society. Such proposals are, therefore, rejected in advance, by virtue of their alleged social consequences, rather than by testing them. Even if they were testable there is no room for testing them, because they should not be tolerated.

Thus we see that, in Popper's socio-political thought, containment and caution overcome openness and audacity, in a striking contrast to what he holds as the fundamental principles of the epistemology of natural sciences. The main victim of this turn is tolerance, which becomes entirely subordinated to other principles. Hence his adoption in politics of a "principle of restricted tolerance", according to which we should tolerate only the ideas (and the persons holding these ideas) that do not endanger the "open society", i.e., who do not deviate substantially from the socio-political tenets of liberalism.[5]

Mao a disciple of Popper (or vice-versa)?

I don't know whether Mao and Popper read each other's writings. But there is a surprising similarity between the positions of these two thinkers, located at

opposite poles of the political spectrum. Mao, like Popper, attributes a fundamental importance to criticism. However, contrary to Popper, he considers the steadfast disposition to devote oneself to the critique of political action the distinctive feature of the true revolutionary as against the "liberal" or the "abstract revolutionary". The true revolutionary must, according to Mao, conduct a permanent battle — uncompromising at the ideological level — against "incorrect" ideas and actions.[6] The attempt to avoid such a battle is for him the essential characteristic of "liberalism", which denies the principle of ideological struggle and aspires to "peace at the expense of principles".

Mao lists eleven main types of this "liberal" tendency. For example: to forgive someone's mistakes merely because the person is a friend or relative; to abstain from public criticism of incorrect ideas and acts, contenting oneself with behind the scene gossiping; to criticize not for the public interest, but for personal motives; to be conscious of one's own errors without trying to correct them. For Mao, all these pernicious attitudes stem from bourgeois egoism, which places individual interest over and above collective/revolutionary interest, and is the basis of every liberal ideology. As opposed to this, Mao proposes the formula "union-criticizes-union", which expresses the appropriate and efficient democratic method for resolving the contradictions that can be found within the people. He himself interprets this formula as follows: "To begin with the desire for union and to resolve the contradictions through the conflict or criticism, with the aim of engendering a new union upon new grounds". Mao insists that "all the problems having an ideological character, all the litigious issues within the people, can only be solved by democratic means, i.e., through discussion, criticism, persuasion, and education; they cannot be resolved by coercion or other authoritarian methods". But he also points out that there are essential differences between the contradictions "within the people", which can be solved by the above mentioned methods, and those contradictions that are "antagonistic", because they oppose the people to its enemies. The latter require another type of treatment, because the people's enemies put their interests above the people's interests. In this way, they do not share the "aspiration to union" which is the necessary condition for the solution of controversies through the democratic/critical method. Against these enemies, it is necessary to use dictatorial methods. For instance, one is entitled "to arrest, to judge and to condemn certain counter-revolutionary elements; to deprive from electoral rights and freedom of expression landowners and elements belonging to the bureaucratic bourgeoisie".

At first sight, the distance between these proposals by Mao and Popper's "open society" is unbridgeable. Nevertheless, if we recall the latter's "principle of restricted tolerance", we begin to realize that the gap is not that wide. For, this principle in fact permits and even stimulates the suppression or severe restriction of the freedom of expression of any conception viewed as opposed to the values of the open society. It identifies those who hold such conceptions as "enemies" of the open society, and thereby prevents their free participation in the public debate characteristic of that society. It turns out that the "democratic" way of resolving controversies applies — for Popper as well as for Mao — only to those whose "aspiration to union" is not called into question. To be sure, the *content* of such an aspiration is radically different for Mao and Popper. Yet, formally, their arguments are strictly parallel and their conclusion is the same: debate, criticism, tolerance and democracy are valuable, but they must be subordinated to other values, and therefore there is no impediment to restrict them.

The argumentation shared by Popper and Mao presupposes a number of premises that we should do well to render explicit at this point: (a) there is no principled difficulty in identifying logical contradictions between conceptions, theories, attitudes, or policy proposals; (b) there are propositions, norms, and values that are distinctive of a society considered superior; (c) these values are immune to criticism because they are the necessary conditions for the very exercise of critical activity; (d) there is no difficulty in identifying ideas (or persons) that are opposed to these values, following which they can be legitimately forbidden to participate in the democratic/critical game.

Judge McGeehan: Popper's disciple *malgré lui*

On February 26, 1940, the Higher Education Council of New York City decided to appoint Bertrand Russell, then teaching at the University of California, as a professor of philosophy at the City College, for a period of three terms. When the appointment was announced, religious and conservative groups initiated a public campaign with the purpose of canceling it. They contended that Russell's ideas were contrary to morality and religion as well as pernicious to the youth. In spite of the enormous public and political

pressure, the Council held its ground (although some of its members modified their vote).

However, a complaint by Mrs. Jean Kay brought the issue to the courts. She argued that the appointment of a foreign citizen who had no right to teach at a public university and held immoral opinions regarding sexual behavior would damage her daughter Gloria, in case she decided to study at City College (which she was entitled to do as a NYC resident). Mrs. Kay's lawyer depicted in the court Russell's works as "lascivious, libidinous, sexual, lubricious, erection-maniac, aphrodisiac, irreverent, untrue, and devoid of moral stamina".[7] He also claimed that Russell and his wife had been seen naked in public, that he directed a nudist colony in England, that he was tolerant vis-à-vis homosexuality, and so on. In addition to such "vices", the lawyer asserted categorically that Russell "is not a philosopher in the true sense of the term, nor is he a lover of wisdom", but rather a "sophist … who by playing with words, expounds captious arguments unsupported by any sensible reasoning, draws conclusions that are not deduced from solid premises", etc. The defense counsel — who represented the Higher Education Council rather than Russell who was not a defendant in the case — did not react to these allegations. He limited himself to denying the legal basis of the claim that Russell could not teach at City College because he was a foreigner, and asked for a dismissal of the case. But the case not only was not dismissed, but became one of the most shocking examples of the partiality with which the juridical apparatus of a democratic country can be made use of.

Judge McGeehan, who had previously been an activist in clerical and conservative organizations, did not consider this a reason to disqualify himself to be in charge of the case. After two days of "careful study" of the four books presented by Mrs. Kay's lawyer as proof of Russell's immorality, the judge made up his mind and decided that the appointment should be revoked. Besides two questionable legal points, his decision was based essentially in the determination of the "doubtful" character of Russell's morality as a person (which allegedly hampers his figure as an educator), in the detailed description of the "lascivious" nature of Russell's teachings, and in the "fact" that he preached the violation of New York State's law by supporting adultery, masturbation, and homosexuality.

Judicial and administrative maneuvers prevented Russell and the City College to appeal the decision. The appointment was revoked, and in this way Gloria's morality, as well as that of other New York young men and women

was duly protected from contamination by the dangerous venom distilled by the thought of one of the greatest philosophers of the 20th century.

This case, which occurred not in the Middle Ages, nor in some backward peripheral country, deserves our attention here for several reasons. First, it illustrates the problems inherent in the *interpretation* of texts or actions, especially when they have some bearing on controversial issues. A comparison between the judge's arguments and Russell's writings he refers to reveals — to the eyes of an observer favorable to Russell — the arbitrary and tendentious nature of the judge's interpretation. In a marginal observation where Russell disapproves the common parental practice of repressing child masturbation, the judge sees a "stimulus to onanism"; in Russell's opposition to the laws that forbid masculine (though not feminine) homosexuality, the judge sees "a call to the law's violation"; and so on. Exaggeration, the constant use of emotive/evaluative expressions, out of context quotation, and similar techniques, reveal the character of the judge's 'free interpretation' of Russell's writings, through which he purports to "confirm" a reading pre-determined by his ideological commitments. And yet, this did not make this interpretation seem unconvincing or ungrounded for a large portion of the public, who shared the judge's ideology.

Second, the case raises the question of the court's right of determining, in the name of society, which ideas deserve to be disseminated and taught and which should be denied this possibility. One might think that in the present case the issue was confined to the relatively limited notion of "academic freedom", i.e., of the autonomy of a university to decide by itself, without external interference, who will teach and what will be taught in its campus. In fact, it became patent that those who contested Russell's appointment were also attacking the principle of tolerance (which they considered an example of "repugnant weakness"), and in this way attempted to redefine the notion of liberty: "It will not be permitted that anyone climb to the podium of liberty" — affirmed Monsignor Francis W. Welsh in a speech praising McGeehan's decision — "in order to stab liberty in the back. And this applies to all communists and their sympathizers, to all Nazis and fascists who put the law of the State above the law of God, to university professors, to publishers, and to any other individual within the borders of the United States". Russell himself, in one of his rare public manifestations in the course of the trial, pointed out that what was at stake was the principle of tolerance and freedom of expression. Hence his rejection of the *New York Times*' suggestion that he should, even if per-

suaded that he was right, be sensitive to New York's public opinion and "spontaneously" decline the appointment. As against this, he argued that a democracy should not be afraid of controversy, which is the best guarantor of democracy. "It is an essential part of democracy" — he said — "that important groups, even majorities, be tolerant towards dissident groups, however small they be and however this may shock their feelings. In a democracy, it is necessary that people learn to bear offence to their feelings …".

Of course, it is not surprising that conservative groups tried to restrict freedom of expression and tolerance. What is perhaps surprising in the present case is the tacit approval this tendency received from liberal circles in American society. The liberal outrage against the trial focused on three issues: (a) the tendentious interpretation of Russell's writings and the dissemination of lies concerning his allegedly immoral behavior; (b) the external intervention in internal university matters; and (c) the questionable judicial procedure. Accordingly, the liberal and public defense of Russell consisted in: (a) the rejection of the misinterpretation and the lies; (b) the defense of academic freedom; and (c) the condemnation of the violations of the judicial procedure. However, with the exception of a few, nobody raised the general and most important question: If Russell professed indeed the "lascivious" opinions that had been attributed to him, would the university (or any other societal organ) have the right and/or the obligation to curtail his right to expound those opinions in public?

The truth is that all of Russell's defenders, including himself, accepted that he should teach only logic and philosophy of mathematics at City College, since his ethical ideas were controversial. That is to say, Popper's principle, according to which society has the right and obligation to avoid the dissemination of certain ideas that are opposed to the norms or values accepted as "important for society's functioning", was generally accepted. The guilt for the "uncomfortable" aspects of the case was for the most part attributed to the lack of neutrality and objectivity of a judge full of prejudice. But this could be overcome either by observing more rigorously the extant procedures or by improving them. This presumes that a *neutral* judge or jury, following an unimpeachable procedural mechanism, are entitled to and capable of determining (with a high degree of plausibility) the correct interpretation of a text or other kind of discourse, of objectively estimating the extent to which they challenge social values, and of deciding whether such a discourse must be suppressed or not.

Arnauld's maneuver

Russell's trial was not the first of its kind, and probably will not be the last one. In Galileo's two trials similar issues arose, namely: Did Galileo actually hold the views that were attributed to him by the prosecutors? Had the Church the right to intervene in the acceptance or rejection of scientific theories? Galileo did not contest the authority of the ecclesiastical courts, but engaged in an elaborate hermeneutic attempt to show that the passages of the Bible that allegedly were contradicted by the Copernican theory could be interpreted in such a way that the contradiction did not obtain. He also partly followed Cardinal Bellarmin's advice to present his views as hypotheses, rather than as categorical affirmations. None of this prevented him from being condemned and punished.

Antoine Arnauld, the well-known 17th century theologian and logician, adopted a different strategy, in his attempt to avoid a similar outcome as in Galileo's and Russell's case (see Chapter 13). Arnauld and his colleagues associated with the convent of Port Royal had been accused of holding the doctrines of Jansenius, which the Church's supreme authorities had declared to be "heretical". The Pope requested them to sign a document acknowledging that such doctrines were in fact contrary to the Catholic dogmas, which would require them either to abjure Jansenism or to be guilty of open insubordination against the Church's legitimate authority. Arnauld's strategy consisted in distinguishing rigorously between the two questions that, as we have seen, arise in cases of this type. The Pope's document — Arnauld observed — contained two main claims: (a) a certain doctrine is heretical and (b) Jansenius held such a doctrine. As for the first claim — he argued — the ecclesiastic authorities are indeed those who have the power to decide since, being divinely inspired and endowed with infallibility in this respect, they know the true doctrine and can therefore determine which doctrines deviate from it. As for the second question, however, it concerns the veracity of an alleged *fact*, and the Church has no more capacity (nor the need) to intervene in factual questions of this kind than anyone else. The fact in question, of course, concerns the correct *interpretation* of Jansenius' writings.[8]

In the light of the above distinction, Arnauld proposed to the Port Royal sisters and to the other Jansenists to sign the papal document with a reservation. The signatory would acknowledge the Church's authority to determine the true doctrine, but would also respect the facts. This strategy might have

worked if the Vatican, in its quarrel with Jansenism, had been prompted only by theological considerations. But the political pressure of Louis XIV and Cardinal Mazarin's intent to destroy the power of their Jansenist opponents, finally prevailed.

Although Arnauld's brilliant diplomatic maneuver was of no practical avail, much can be learned from it. It consisted in an attempt to restrict the doctrine of the Church's infallibility to matters of revelation. It argued that in all other matters, including those regarding the interpretation of texts other than the sacred ones, the only acknowledged authority is Reason, based on its own criteria of judgment, reasoning, and veracity. In other words, Arnauld — just as Popper, Russell and the liberals who defended him, Galileo, and many others — is persuaded that there are reliable and objective criteria, accessible to any reasonable person, that permit to decide without doubt whether a given thesis is in fact contained or not in a text or any other form of discourse. It is sufficient to read it in good faith, with intellectual rigor, and full knowledge of the language, in order to be able to make such a decision.

Naïve semantics

Mill, Popper, Mao, Russell, and also Arnauld (although the latter also took into account the pragmatic dimension of interpretation, albeit not in the case discussed above) base themselves upon a conception of meaning that I would call "naïve semantics". Its assumptions are the following ones:

(a) "Meanings" (a term that covers here the "content" of assertions, theories, norms of conduct, etc.) have an objective existence, independent of the form in which they are expressed, discovered, justified and made use of by specific persons in specific contexts. In Popper's "three worlds" ontology (not necessarily shared by other partisans of naïve semantics), meanings (along with "ideas" and, surprisingly, "texts") are entities belonging to World III, which differs from World II (psycho-social states and processes) and World I (physical objects and processes).[9]

(b) A text's (or discourse's) interpretation is transparent to whoever knows the syntactic and semantic rules of its language and applies them correctly. The attribution of an interpretation to a text is therefore, as stressed by Arnauld, a factual matter. But it is not subject to the problems that plague the determination of the truth of any empirical proposition. For, the interpre-

tation follows from the logical-algorithmic application of the linguistic rules, which is immune to the fallibility typical of empirical hypotheses, just as arithmetic calculations are. For "naïve semantics", not only the attribution of an interpretation to a text is unproblematic, but also the logical relations (e.g., the relation of contradiction) between "meanings" are determined without any problem and in an entirely objective, so to speak "mechanical" way (see the 'cryptographic' model, Chapter 9).

Naïve semantics leads to a "purified" notion of what is a "conflict of ideas".[10] Such conflicts occur in a sterilized arena, where the contenders are decontextualized ideas or theories, detached from their psycho-social reverberations. The rules of the contest are the pure rules of logic, the only legitimate weapons are valid arguments, and the winner is determined by the logical weight of the best argument. In such an arena there is no room for implicit meanings, innuendo, or subtle rhetorical means of persuasion. It bears no trace of the psychological dust (connotations, emotions, imagination, etc.) that accompany ideas in their long process of formation and development. All of this is marginal and irrelevant for what "really matters" in the conflict of ideas, and can be easily suppressed thanks to the means we have to determine with precision the meaning of the texts where the conflicting ideas are expounded. To be sure, someone like judge McGeehan may distort a text's meaning, but such cases are due to the person's ill-faith or to her incapacity of adopting an objective posture, and as such they can be easily detected and condemned through the application of the correct interpretive procedure.

A non-naïve application of naïve semantics

The Brazilian newspaper *O Estado de São Paulo* (August 21, 1981) contains the following report:

> The commander of the 14th Motorized Infantry Brigade, brigadier-general José Antonio Barbosa de Morais, said yesterday in Florianópolis that to say that the military must return to the barracks is to use "words that have no meaning", since "we are, as we have always been, in the barracks". He added that the mode of being of the military is democratic and that every movement with this end is endorsed by the military… "In this sense, it is impossible to cast doubt on the words of the President of the Republic, according to which we are marching towards democracy, towards the happiness of the Brazilian people", the commander concluded.[11]

We have here an excellent example of a quite disingenuous use of "naïve semantics". According to the general, an utterance must be understood exclusively in terms of its literal meaning. It is in this sense that the demand that the military return to their barracks has "no meaning" because its literal semantic presupposition (namely, that the military had left their barracks) is false. On the other hand, since the presupposition that the military have a profound love for democracy is obviously true, the President's — i.e., a general's — words not only have meaning: their truth is unquestionable, for they are virtually a tautology.

What deserves our attention in this example is not so much the evident ill faith of the general-linguist, but the limitations of the literalism inherent to naïve semantics. If one were to follow strictly such a literalism, one would have to declare incomprehensible even what is easily comprehensible given a minimal amount of contextual information. By the way, the same strict standards would render the general's own assertion *literally* false: after all, he and his colleagues do not sleep, eat, shop and enjoy their vacations invariably in the barracks, so that they are not *always* there. We — as well as the general — would be acting disingenuously, from a communicative point of view, if we were to be so strictly literal. His 'always' must be *interpreted* with the same liberality as one interprets the quantifier 'everyone' in the sentence 'Everyone is reading Vonnegut'. And this is how, for sure, he desires to be interpreted. But then, he must accept that 'to return to the barracks' in the mouth of the military's critics deserves also to be interpreted metaphorically or metonymically, i.e., in terms of its figurative rather than literal meaning.

The general could reply — making use of more subtle linguistic distinctions — that the two cases differ. Quantifiers are notoriously dependent upon the context for the determination of their scope, for they always refer to a "universe of discourse" implicitly conveyed by the context of utterance. In this sense, they are comparable to so-called "deictics" (e.g., 'here', 'now', 'I', 'yesterday'). An utterance containing one of these expressions can only be properly understood if the addressee has access to the relevant contextual information (e.g., where, by whom, and when the utterance was uttered). Such a *minimum of interpretation*, which requires knowledge of extra-linguistic *facts*, is needed for the determination of the *literal meaning* itself of utterances containing deictics, and cannot be avoided on pain of canceling the very possibility of communication. However — the general would say — this is not the case regarding the expression 'to return to the barracks', which

contains no quantifiers nor deictics, and therefore has a complete context-free literal meaning. To argue in this way, however, is to mistakenly assume that in order to understand an utterance it is sufficient to understand its literal meaning, with the eventual help of the context whenever this is unavoidable — as in the case of deictics. The truth is that understanding an utterance involves much more than "deciphering" its literal meaning. Such a deciphering is nothing but a first step, which provides only a "first interpretive hypothesis" (see Chapter 26a). Only in the light of contextual information and thanks to the application of pragmatic principles one can decide whether this first hypothesis should be accepted as an adequate interpretation or should be replaced. For instance, the sentence "Peter is an excellent cook", uttered in a dinner prepared by Peter, is appropriately interpreted as an expression of praise for Peter, whereas the same sentence uttered as a reply to an inquiry about Peter's qualifications for a position of chemistry teacher conveys the message "I do not recommend him".

The general's literalism is no doubt an extreme variety of the genre, which other partisans of naïve semantics presumably would not endorse. Nevertheless, it has the merit of showing the absolute necessity of an "interpretive work" to be done even in "transparent" daily communicative situations — a work that comprises the formulation of interpretive hypotheses and their acceptance or rejection in the light of information originating in the text as well as in the context (see Chapter 15).

Tolerance and interpretation

One need not go as far as equating "meaning" to "conditions of use" in order to realize the unacceptability of a naïve semantics that ignores the role of the context of use in the determination of meaning. It is sufficient to recall the various ways, analyzed by pragmatics, in which interpretation is context-dependent — some of which are exemplified above. An utterance's or text's interpretation is far from being the result of a precise algorithmic process. At best, it is ruled by heuristic rules, which suggest how to formulate more or less well grounded interpretive hypotheses. These, in turn, are to be empirically tested against information concerning the context of utterance (or of the text's production and dissemination), of the relevant "background", of the implications of the proposed interpretation for the comprehension of the rest of the

text and of its author's "state of mind" — among other things (see Chapters 1, 8a, and others). Such a process of formulation and testing of hypotheses is analogous to what happens with scientific hypotheses, provided in the latter no privilege is granted to the "justification" in detriment of the "discovery" of explanatory hypotheses.[12] Given this analogy, there is no reason to presume — as partisans of naïve semantics seem to do — that the understanding of a text is less fallible than a scientific hypothesis.

We might invoke, against naïve semantics, the authority of other weighty philosophical arguments. The analytic philosophers Quine and Davidson, for example, demonstrated that even the interpretation of a single utterance is in fact a *global* process, which activates — and thereby puts to test — not only the linguistic semantic rules, but also the whole of logic and the ensemble of beliefs of the utterer as well as of the interpreter. A translation or interpretation of an utterance consists, according to them, in the formulation of a hypothesis that is subject to an uneliminable *indeterminacy*, so that whether a proposed interpretation is *the* correct one is something that cannot be established once and for all. To this one might add Mill's claim that the *meaning* (and not only the truth or value) of ideas and theories is never *given* and *fixed* once and for all, but depends upon the existence of a continuous *interpretative tradition*, as well as upon their constant confrontation with opposed ideas and theories. And the "continental philosophers" working within the hermeneutical tradition have highlighted the essential contribution of the interpreter's beliefs in the interpretive act, calling into question the idea that the meaning is "in the text" (see Chapter 29).

One cannot, thus, entirely remove the dust the interpretative process inevitably accumulates upon meanings, ideas, and theories. The "conflict of ideas" takes place in fact in the "dirty" arena of interpretation. Under one interpretation, someone's assertions are contrary to morality, socialism, or the open society; under another, not. On the other hand, morality, socialism, and the open society can be themselves interpreted in different ways.

The "charity principle", necessary for rational communication, demands that the utterances of a person be interpreted in the most "reasonable" possible way. What to do, however, if the beliefs of our interlocutor do not fit our expectations of reasonableness, based on our own standards and on our interpretations of his or her earlier utterances and behavior? What to do if he himself does not care as much as we do about being coherent? Finally, can one really demand that, in the heat of controversy, when we are persuaded that we

are right and our adversary wrong, the principle of charity will be faithfully obeyed? Obviously, charity and reasonableness cannot be taken as a rule that applies to all communicative exchanges, nor do these notions have the same sense in different circumstances. They are nothing but *one* of the heuristic principles that guide the interpretive process.

I do not want to give the wrong impression that every interpretation is tendentious, arbitrary, and leading to misunderstanding rather than understanding — be it favorable or contrary to the interlocutor's opinions. Pragmatics teaches us that there are a number of interpretive principles and procedures, commonly used in each linguistic and cultural community, which the community members employ successfully to reach adequate interpretations for most utterances in their contexts of use. But pragmatics also teaches us that every interpretation is liable to revision.

The morals I want to draw from this story is a different one. To my mind, tolerance is one of the expressions of our acknowledgment that dogmatism — in science, in religion, in politics, or in any other field — does not fit what we know about our cognitive capacities, especially regarding the way in which we use language. However, paternalistic tolerance, which employs critical criteria immune to critique, and issues intolerant judgments that determine the destiny of ideas and of those who hold them, on the basis of naïve semantics — *this* variety of tolerance has not yet freed itself, I believe, from dogmatism. If I have managed to shake one of the dogmas upon which this kind of tolerance rests, by showing that tolerance must begin already at the early stage of interpretation, I hope to have made a small step towards clearing the way for a conception of tolerance which is closer to real anti-dogmatism.

Notes

1. Until the 19th century, atheists were not allowed to testify in British courts, for one could not trust their oath. John Stuart Mill reports two cases in which persons were "rejected as jurymen, and one of them was grossly insulted by the judge and by one of the counsel, because they honestly declared that they had no theological belief", and argues that the rule forbidding testimony by declared atheists is "suicidal", since "under pretense that atheists must be liars, it admits the testimony of all atheists who are willing to lie" (Mill 1939: 971-972).

2. Mill is ironical about the value and self-confidence of a "civilization" that cogitates of organizing "not a crusade, but a *civilisade*" against the barbarian polygamous Mormons,

instead of *really* trusting the alleged superiority of its ideas and way of life and its capacity to defeat its "primitive" opponents in a "free battle of ideas" (Mill 1939: 1022).

3. "…since the general or prevailing opinion on any subject is rarely or never the whole truth, it is only by the collision of adverse opinions that the remainder of the truth has a chance of being supplied" (Mill 1939: 989-990).

4. Whereas the summary of Popper's views on the methodology of natural science presented above is based mainly on Popper (1968, 1969a, 1972), the summary of his views on the social sciences and related ethico-political issues is based on Popper (1961, 1966).

5. "Tolerance towards all who are not intolerant and who do not propagate intolerance" (Popper 1965, vol. 1: 235). For a critique of this principle and of Popper's liberalism, see Dascal (1980b).

6. I am referring to two articles by Mao Tse-Tung, namely, "The struggle against liberalism" (1937) and "On the correct way to deal with contradictions within" (1957). Both are to be found in Mao Tse-Tung (1962).

7. For a detailed description of the case, including many quotations from the relevant documents (including those used here), see Paul Edwards' appendix in Russell (1957).

8. For more information on Arnauld's strategy in the Port Royal vs. the Vatican case, see Dominicy (1984). For its relationship with Arnauld's tactics in his controversy with Malebranche about the nature of ideas, see Dascal (1990c).

9. For Popper's three worlds theory, see, for example, "On the theory of the objective mind" (Popper 1972: 153-190). Naïve semantics has a strong affinity with some sort of Platonism. Even empiricist philosophers, for whom "ideas" are typically psychological entities, cannot resist the temptation of detaching them from their contingent underpinnings in order to account for what they consider to be non-contingent truths. See for instance the following telltale passage of Locke's *Essay* (1965, Book 4, Chapter 4, Paragraph 7): "And hence it follows that *moral knowledge is as capable of real certainty* as mathematics. For certainty being but the perception of the agreement or disagreement of our *ideas*, and demonstration nothing but the perception of such agreement by the intervention of other *ideas* or mediums, *our moral ideas* as well as mathematical, being *archetypes* themselves and so adequate and complete *ideas*, all the agreement or disagreement which we shall find in them will produce real knowledge, as well as in mathematical figures".

10. For a critique of the Popperian conception of criticism that underlies his "pure" conception of what a "conflict of ideas" is, see Dascal (1997a).

11. The reader should recall that the general's comment was made when a military dictatorship was in power in Brazil.

12. Provided, of course, one acknowledges the essential role of what C. S. Peirce called "abduction", along with that of "deduction" and "induction".

Chapter 21

Understanding other cultures
The ecology of cultural space

I have not been driven into the lively philosophical and anthropological debate about relativism by sheer intellectual curiosity. Nor is my motivation directly related to the important questions such a debate raises about the grounds, methods and objectives of my professional work as a philosopher. It derives, rather, from a personal concern for the fate of the remaining native peoples and cultures of the Americas. As an offspring and member of the dominant, western, cultural tradition in the continent, I feel responsible for the ongoing destruction of human lives and human ways of life in this part of the world. This destruction, performed for the sake of ideals such as 'development' or 'progress', goes on, in certain parts of the continent, at an ever-increasing rate. In Brazil, to give but one example, the turnout of university graduates prepared to record and study native languages does not match the rate of disappearance of the last speakers of still unstudied languages. Aside from what such a disappearance means for the cultural patrimony of humankind, it involves, first and foremost, indescribable suffering for humans — both as individuals and as groups.

My main concern is thus a practical one, namely to contribute towards bringing to a halt such a destructive process. I believe this requires, in addition to immediate political action, a far-reaching change of attitude. This, in turn, requires a critique of certain basic ways of conceptualizing inter-cultural comparison and interaction, upon which both popular attitude and official policy towards the natives have been traditionally based. Once these conceptualizations are perceived for what they are, the policies and attitudes they justify should be — hopefully — abandoned.

I admit that my assumption that some sort of conceptual analysis is likely to have useful practical consequences is rather naïve, and that it is perhaps prompted by my understandable professional bias. In fact, I entertain serious doubts about this assumption. For if, as it is quite possible, the attitudes in question are more deeply rooted than the conceptualizations that are used to

justify them, then there is hardly a chance that a rational critique of the latter will affect the former. Even so, the attempt is worth a try. After all, we praise ourselves and our culture above all for the role rationality is supposed to play in our conduct.

The main target of my critique is the notion of *invidious comparison*. I will contend that such a notion underlies most universalist positions. They rely upon a certain interpretation of the (largely spatial) metaphors that punctuate western discourse about inter-cultural relations. Relativist positions, on the other hand, in their eagerness to reject *invidious* comparison, tend to reject *comparison* altogether. In so doing, however, they retain the same old metaphors for inter-cultural relations, albeit reinterpreting them. This fact, it seems to me, partially accounts for the impasse in the universalist/relativist debate and for the tendency to reduce it to a matter of opposed attitudes. In order to transcend this impasse, and to lead to some acceptable alternative to invidious comparison, I suggest that a change must be made at the level of the grounding metaphors themselves.

Invidious comparison and cultural space

Anthropologists, philosophers and more recently the general public carefully avoid the use of epithets such as 'savage' or 'primitive' when referring to other cultures, for such implicitly comparative terms are widely perceived as containing a strong negative connotation.[1] Unfortunately, our deeply rooted derogatory attitude towards other cultures cannot be purged by simply avoiding a few terms. "If you think about it" — says the anthropologist Joanna Overing — "most of our jargon designates 'primitiveness' and therefore 'lesser'". And she specifies:

> We wish to capture the difference of 'the other'; yet in so doing we often (unwittingly) denigrate 'the other' through the very process of labelling him/her as different. I think it is certainly true of such labels as 'kinship-based society', 'magical rites', 'mythology', 'shaman', and so on. None of *these labels* have anything to do with levels of technological 'advancement', but rather they refer to social roles, frameworks of thought, symbols, systems of morality, axioms, values and sentiments — all areas of life and related theory that may well be more sophisticated than the same areas of life and related theory in our own society (Overing 1987: 82).

Overing traces the persistence of the derogatory component in anthropological discourse to the "heritage of evolutionary theory from the nineteenth century" (ibid.). This may well be the case. But long before evolutionary modes of explanation took hold of western thought, an invidious attitude towards other cultures was certainly quite widespread in the West. To be sure, the discovery of new cultures in the sixteenth century immediately posed the problem of allocating them a proper position in the accepted biblical chronology.[2] Nevertheless — I submit — it was the expansion of Europe's physical space by European discoverers and explorers that provided the main model for modernity's invidious conceptualization of cultures and inter-cultural relations.

On this model, cultures are conceived as *territories*.[3] They have *boundaries*, which are *lines* that can (or cannot) be *crossed*. Some cultures are said to be *closed*, while others are *open*. The former fiercely resist to external influences and severely restrict the internal *mobility* of its members; they adopt a *local*, *narrow*, territorial-based outlook; they are *confined* to the *periphery* of the cultural *space*. The latter view mobility as a main asset and encourage *expansion*; they have a *global* or *universal* claim over the entire cultural space at whose *center* they lie and whence they *reach out* towards other cultural *areas*; they are entitled to such a claim by their *superiority* over other cultures; the alleged fact that they have overcome *parochialism* and achieved a universal outlook is often offered as a proof of such a superiority. Differences and similarities among cultures can be *deep* or *superficial*. Deep differences entail that the cultures in question are perceived as *far apart* and that it is very hard, if not impossible (in which case the cultures are said to be *incommensurable*), to *bridge* the *gap* that separates them. Such a feat — when possible — is perceived as an exceptional achievement of especially endowed or well-situated *mediators*, such as field anthropologists, bilinguals, etc. Typically these individuals are seen as bizarre, *borderline* cases. Superficial differences imply *proximity*, a shared *core*, and relatively easy and uneventful boundary crossing, leading to an eventual integration within a single cultural territory.

This network of spatial metaphors could be further illustrated. I leave this to the reader. In what follows I will explore the way in which some of them shape current views on inter-cultural relations.

Beyond the animal sphere

A culture's attitude towards other human groups is often linked to its attitude towards animals. Just as animals are regarded as inferior to humans, and can therefore be legitimately exploited by them, so too one's own human group is perceived as embodying — better than any other group — the distinctive human characteristics; and this alleged fact justifies the claims of superiority of one's culture over the others.

At first, human superiority may be conceived as ranging over a given set of properties, as epitomized by the following allegations of the representative of humankind, defending his kind against the accusation of oppression and injustice towards animals:

> 'They are our slaves', said the human representative, 'we are their owners... We have philosophical arguments and rational proofs of the soundness of our claims... Our beautiful form, the erect construction of our bodies, our upright carriage, our keen senses, the subtlety of our discrimination, our keen minds and superior intellects indicate that we are masters and they slaves to us'.[4]

But the acknowledgment of animal excellence in specific domains soon leads to a dispositional shift in the characterization of man's key virtue. Whereas animals are forever enclosed within the boundaries of their innate endowment, humans have the capacity to overcome their innate — as well as circumstantial — limitations. Accordingly, human superiority lies not in this or that particular achievement. Such achievements, no matter how impressive, are rather to be seen as particular manifestations of a deep-seated dispositional property, which unfolds in an open-ended series of ever more impressive achievements of humankind. Rousseau (1755: 48) called this property "la faculté de se perfectionner" (self-perfectibility); Herder (1770: 111) called it "reflection" or "reason". Kant (1784: 118) characterized reason as the exclusively human "capacity to enlarge the rules and purposes of the use of his resources far beyond natural instinct" and insisted that "it does not recognize any boundary to its projects". And Quine (1969: 128), without speaking of reason, stressed man's "ingenuity to rise above" the species' innate 'quality space'. All these authors see in such a property a clear indication of human superiority over the other animals. For Quine, for example, the fact that we must have an "innate standard of similarity" is "part of our animal birthright" for it must be granted to other animals as well. "And interestingly enough" — Quine remarks — "it is characteristically animal in its lack of

intellectual status" (Quine 1969: 123). But we, unlike other animals, are able to improve similarity's 'intellectual status' through a process of "development away from the immediate, subjective, animal sense of similarity to the remoter objectivity of a similarity determined by scientific hypotheses and posits and constructs" (134).

Herder explains the difference between man and other animals in terms of the different scopes of their 'spheres' of activity:

> Every animal has its sphere to which it belongs from birth, into which it is born, in which it stays throughout its life, and in which it dies; and it is a remarkable fact that the keener the senses of the animals and the more wonderful their artifacts, the narrower is their sphere; the more uniform is their artifact. ... The bee in its hive builds with a wisdom that Egeria could not teach her Numa; but away from these cells and away from its predetermined activity in these cells, the bee is nothing. ... That is its world. How marvellous is this insect, and how narrow the sphere of its activity. ...
>
> Man has no such uniform and narrow sphere where only one performance is expected of him: a whole world of ventures and tasks is lying about him. His senses and his organization are not focused on one object: he has senses for all things and hence naturally weaker and duller senses for each one. The powers of his soul are spread over the world; there is no orientation of his conceptions toward one single object and hence no artifactive drive, no artifactive skill (Herder 1770: 104-105).
>
> A sounder conception makes of man's rationality, of this distinctive character of his species ... the overall determination of his powers of thought within the total complex of his senses and of his drives. ... If man had the drives of the animals, he could not have what we now call reason in him; for such drives would pull his forces darkly toward a single point, in such a way that he would have no free sphere of awareness ... (111).

Descartes, a century and a half before Herder, had firmly established this topos as a central element in the modern worldview.[5] In part V of his *Discours de la Méthode*, Descartes compares animals to machines, and contends that it is precisely their (eventual) excellence in specific tasks, as opposed to man's ability to cope (in principle) with any task (i.e., the 'general purpose' character of man's intelligence), that betrays the mechanical nature of animals. For Descartes, the clearest external manifestation of this human superiority is the use of language: machines (or animals) can be 'programmed' to react 'linguistically' to a set of given stimuli (e.g., shouting when hurt); but, unlike man, they can neither respond appropriately to, nor produce, an unlimited set of utterances (see Chapter 18).

Local skills vs. global perfectibility

Obviously, humans belonging to other cultures, as opposed to animals, possess language and are able to cope with a wide variety of stimuli and situations. They thus qualify — by Herder's and Descartes's criteria — as members of our species. Having established a sharp divide between men and animals, neither of these authors succumbs to the temptation of applying a similar divide to human groups. And yet, invidious cultural comparison often relies on a strategy strikingly similar to the one discussed in the preceding section.

Most of us, Westerners, are prepared to admit that other cultures are better than ours in dealing with certain matters. We accept the widespread belief that the Eskimos are able to discriminate snow varieties, the Gauchos horses, the Bedouins camels, better than anybody else. We admire the sense of orientation of the Pirahã in the dark recesses of the Amazonian forest, where we feel completely lost after a few steps; we revere the "marvellous pharmacological knowledge" of the Shuar (Karsten 1989:572). We concede that Aztec hydraulic technology was by far superior to the best European equivalent at the time; that Chinese acupuncture may succeed where western medicine fails. We acknowledge that African artists achieve aesthetic perfection in their woodcarvings; that Balinese gamelan music is superbly deep; that Sinhalese dance is delicate and sensitive; that Cantonese gastronomy is exquisite.

We can sincerely believe all these and many similar claims without feeling that they challenge in any way the faith we have in our superiority. For all these claims refer to *local* achievements, to excellence in well-specified domains. Our superiority, on the other hand, lies rather in our *global* capacity; in the alleged unlimited ability we — as individuals or as a society — have of self-improvement in *any* domain. To wit: our science yields such a systematic and profound knowledge of horses, camels and snow that Gauchos, Bedouins and Eskimos, respectively, cannot dream of; our instruments can improve our capacity of orientation anywhere; our medicine, unhindered by "the superstitions and other peculiarities characteristic of the primitive mind" (Karsten 1989:576), can explain and rationally use Shuar pharmacology as well as Chinese acupuncture; and our taste may be refined so as to appreciate the best there is in other cultures' art.

Cultures other than ours do not challenge our superiority as long as their superior skills are conceived as pinned down narrowly to a limited sphere. This allows one to consider their achievements not as expressions of rational-

ity but rather of sheer animal (or mechanical) perfection. As long as an animal species or a culture remains enclosed in its innate similarity standards, in Quine's terms, it does not "rise from savagery" (Quine 1969: 135). It is "progress of similarity standards" that marks "the race's progress from muddy savagery" (134).

According to this view, cultures can be rated according to the degree to which they manage to achieve such a progress. Some do not make progress at all and remain in a state of muddy savagery. Others achieve partial progress, i.e., improvement in the similarity standards pertaining to specific domains — i.e., a merely local achievement. Finally others — e.g., western civilization — develop forms of activity — notably science — that ensure progress in all domains. The latter are clearly superior in so far as they permit the full consummation of the specifically human capacity of unlimited perfectibility.

Parochial holism

The possibility of non-invidious comparison only arises when one is ready to assign to other cultures a set of global abilities comparable in scope and quality to one's own. A set that characterizes a full-blooded form of life, complete with its self-evaluation and other-evaluation standards, as well as with its perfectibility potential. Holism seems to be, then, a necessary ingredient of unprejudiced cultural comparison.

Modern ethnography deserves credit for substantiating empirically the need for this essentially holistic perspective. When anthropologists became deeply involved with the cultures they were observing, in what came to be called the participant-observer method, they were able to appreciate the fact that these people out there have a language which is no less complex and rich than Indo-European languages, that they have elaborate kinship systems, that they have a systematic way of categorizing their environment, that they possess a religion, a morality, a literature, a collective memory, art, rules of etiquette, rules of communication and argumentation — in short, a complete set of interlocked socially shared systems comparable in scope to ours. In the words of Malinowski (1922: 10):

> It is a very far cry from the famous answer given long ago by a representative authority who, asked what are the manners and customs of the natives, answered, 'Customs none, manners beastly', to the position of the modern Ethnographer!

> This latter, with his tables of kinship terms, genealogies, maps, plans and diagrams, proves the existence of an extensive and big organisation, shows the constitution of the tribe, or the clan, or the family; and he gives us a picture of the natives subjected to a strict code of behaviour and good manners, to which in comparison the life at the Court of Versailles or Escurial was free and easy.

Once this much is granted, it is no longer easy to see on what basis to range different cultures along a single scale. A fair comparison would have to be based on some holistic measure, say, of the 'quality of life' each culture seeks (and provides) for its members. Presumably, this would have to be defined over a set of transcultural parameters along with their respective weights. But, in the light of the ethnographer's findings, it can hardly be expected that different cultures will concur on the list and relative weights of these parameters. In the absence of a clear-cut comparative standard, it is no longer obvious that 'the other' is inferior and can therefore be justifiably subjected to the interventionist patterns of inter-cultural contacts the West has traditionally adopted, ranging from outright suppression or enslavement, through forceful conversion, to more subtle forms of economic and cultural imperialism.

Cultural relativism emerges as the doctrine that purports to undermine the basis for invidious cultural evaluation and the patterns of interaction it warrants.[6] In a note to the passage quoted above, Malinowski stresses his contempt for such patterns:

> The legendary 'early authority' who found the natives only beastly and without customs is left behind by a modern writer, who, speaking about the Southern Massim with whom he lived and worked 'in close contact' for many years, says: '...We teach lawless men to become obedient, inhuman men to love, and savage men to change'. And again: 'Guided in his conduct by nothing but his instincts and propensities, and governed by his unchecked passions...' 'Lawless, inhuman and savage!'. A grosser misstatement of the real state of things could not be invented by anyone wishing to parody the Missionary point of view (ibid.).

However, it is not only the missionary's or the conquistador's attitude that the modern ethnographer's new stance condemns to intellectual disrepute. Sooner or later, anthropologists and other social scientists are bound to turn their investigative gaze to their own culture. When they do so, they have no defensible way of protecting it from what they have found to be true of all other cultures, unless they revert to the invidious pattern they are eager to avoid. Consider, for example, Emile Durkheim's case. According to Mary Douglas, he is to be praised for having demonstrated that thought is con-

trolled by social factors. And yet, he refrains from applying this thesis to western society: "With one arm he was brandishing the sabre of sociological determinism, and with the other he was protecting from any such criticism the intellectual achievements of his own culture... The social construction of reality applied fully to them, the primitives, and only partially to us" (Douglas 1978: xii). The reason for this — she claims — was his scientific realism: the belief in the ability of the scientific method to capture 'the world as it is'. But, since the scientific method is itself a product of a certain kind of society, why should we believe that it is immune from social determinism? What reason can any culture — including ours — have to "claim that their sacred mysteries are true and that other people's sacred is false" (xx)? Why rest content with uncovering the social structuring of the minds of feathered Indians and painted aborigines rather than of our own mind (ibid.)? Isn't the "unforgivable optimism", to which Douglas attributes Durkheim's belief that his discoveries "applied only to them, ... that we have a more genial destiny" (ibid.), in fact a disguised manifestation of the traditional invidious attitude towards other cultures?

In order to avoid this, cultural relativism goes epistemological. This means not only asking, "how is anthropological knowledge of the way natives think, feel, and perceive possible?" (Geertz 1983: 56). It means looking at our own practices — including that of producing 'knowledge' — as being on a par with any other native practice we study. Once we attempt to perform the ethnography of our society's thought, once we realize that "most effective academic communities are not that much larger than most peasant villages and just about as ingrown" (Geertz 1983: 157), it seems inevitable to acknowledge that *all* knowledge is ultimately local, that there is no justification for our sciences' or philosophies' pretense of rising above the parochialism of the intellectual villages where they are concocted.

At this point, the picture of cultural space has undergone a significant change. Not only has the sphere of each primitive culture been expanded into a complete and complex 'framework' of thought and action. Our own culture appears now as no less ethnocentric than the others, and our thought as no less enclosed in its own framework. There is no longer one 'world as it is', but a plurality of worlds, which people belonging to different cultures are said to inhabit (cf. Geertz 1983: 161).[7] These worlds are separated by almost insurmountable barriers; they are alien worlds.

Within such a picture, the notion of incommensurability looms large.

Cross-world understanding or translation becomes an extremely difficult enterprise; and intellectually dangerous as well, for those that attempt it — even if imbued with a relativist spirit — are invariably charged with naïveté or with an implicit allegiance to western universalist prejudices.[8] Searching for an appropriate way to overcome these difficulties, anthropologists shop around for any help they can get, be it from hermeneutics (Geertz 1983: 5), from Feyerabend's dadaist methodology (Overing 1987), or even from poetry: "Perhaps we are closer to the poet ... than we are to neutral scientific observers..." (Hobart 1987: 23). But at their less theoretical moments they half-heartedly recognize the hopelessness of their enterprise:

> I did not cherish the pathetic illusion that the Shavante accepted me as one of them, or my family either. They tolerated us. They might even be happy to see us come back, provided we brought plenty of presents. But they could not speak freely with us. Even if they could, we were separated by a barrier to further understanding which I wondered if years of field work could penetrate. The task appeared utterly hopeless. At that moment I saw the whole world atomized, each individual wrapped in the impenetrable cocoon of his individuality, inscrutable. People could not understand people. I had known this as a constant theme in European literature. What was worse, when I was tired I believed it, so I think I was doing among the Shavante? I decided I needed a rest (Maybury-Lewis 1968: 265-266).

Bridgeheads, ladders, and flat landscapes

Nobody is quite happy, including relativists, with this gloomy picture of solipsistic cultural worlds. Universalists fight back in a number of ways.

An often used line of attack is a straight *tu quoque* blow against skeptical anthropologists and translators. 'Look at what you have achieved!' — is the motto of this line. You feel tired and lonely after a year's fieldwork. This is understandable. But you have done a great job: you *did* translate, you *did* manage to overcome the barrier, to bring a remote culture closer to us, you *did* allow us a glimpse into their 'world' (notice the quotation marks): "The best evidence against relativism is, ultimately, the very activity of anthropologists" (Sperber 1982: 180).[9] According to this line of argumentation, relativism cannot be based on empirical evidence, for if it were true, "the supporting evidence could not have been obtained, nor could it have been communicated to us — in clear English" (Rosemont 1988: 50). It seems inevitable, then, to con-

clude — with Davidson (1984a) — that relativist talk of 'incommensurable' conceptual schemes doesn't make any sense, and that the very concept of a conceptual scheme is useless.

Defenders of this view tend to downplay translation difficulty and, with it, linguistic relativism: "...meaning can very easily escape from the bonds of syntax and conventional word meanings, as shown by the success of missionary translators of the Bible, for example, and experienced by every ethnographer who has led his informants into discussion of what to them are unfamiliar ideas" (Hallpike 1979: 85). But this does not seem to correspond to the facts. Bible translation into a native language is a lifelong job, and difficulties are far from negligible, as reported for example by Longacre (1991: 129-141). As for discussing unfamiliar ideas with informants, my own — admittedly very limited — field experience points in the opposite direction. For example, one informant once told me that in Guarani, unlike in Portuguese, one could not lie. When I tried to relate this striking claim to (for me) familiar semantic and pragmatic issues (was it so because Guarani words are somehow non-arbitrary vis-à-vis their referents, or because they always reveal the speakers' intentions?), there was a breakdown in communication. Perhaps the problem was my lack of ingenuity in conveying these questions to him, rather than his inability to understand them. Whatever the reason, the ethnographic literature contains plenty of similar anecdotic examples, which show that it is not easy, for either side in an inter-cultural exchange, to understand the other's 'theories'. A way out for the anti-relativist is to focus on apparently non-theoretical vocabulary, such as that pertaining to the semantic fields of color and botanical or zoological taxonomies. Studies of such vocabularies, contends Sperber (1982: 161), are conclusive: "Most of them do not corroborate a relativist view". Needless to say, such a verdict is far from being universally accepted.[10]

The claim that cross-cultural translation cannot be so difficult as to be globally impossible is backed by arguments to the effect that breakdowns in translation can be recognized only against a widely shared background: "We can be clear about breakdowns in translation when they are local enough, for a background of generally successful translation provides what is needed to make the failures intelligible" (Davidson 1984b: 192). Successful translation (or, for that matter, interpretation), in turn, consists in establishing a bridgehead on the other side. When this is achieved, one has *ipso facto* both assumed and proved the existence of what the relativist denies, namely the existence

of a common core of rationality shared by all cultures. One's interpretive achievement shows that

> ...there has to be some set of interpretations whose correctness is more likely than that of any later interpretation which conflicts with it. The set consists of what a rational man cannot fail to believe in simple perceptual situations, organized by rules of coherent judgement, which a rational man cannot fail to subscribe to. All interpretation thus rests on rationality assumptions, which must succeed at the bridgehead and which can be modified at later stages only by interpretations which do not sabotage the bridgehead (Hollis 1982: 73-74).

This argument is a more or less straightforward application of the so-called principle of charity.[11] "Since charity — says Davidson (1984b: 197) — is not an option, but a condition of having a workable theory, it is meaningless to suggest that we might fall into massive error by endorsing it". On the face of it, charity is also a well-intentioned, good-natured principle regarding those to whom it applies. It tells those who apply it not to be impatient, intolerant, and uncharitable towards other people who, at first sight, may look silly, unreasonable, or foolish: "How could a sound person believe that there are dragons, not 'once upon a time', but there and then, within walking distance? How am I to reconcile my respect for Filate with the knowledge that such a belief is absurd?" (Sperber 1982: 150). The principle recommends restraint in taking at face value such expressions of foolishness; it suggests an interpretive strategy that consists in looking for reasonableness behind apparent unreasonableness.

No doubt this moderation is an improvement upon the straightforward strategy of passing judgment on the other on the basis of a cursory checking of satisfaction of the interpreter's criteria of rationality. Instead, whenever the result of such a summary checking is the verdict "Irrational!", those who abide by the principle of charity say: "Let's double-check!". Perhaps they will even triple-check or more before they decide to lock the other in some mental institution. And yet, what kind of charity is this? Is it really different from the arrogant attitude of the uncharitable cursory interpreter? After all, double or triple checking does not alter the standards of rationality through which the checking is made. These standards remain the interpreter's standards — the only ones he can use.

What relativism suggests, however, is that 'the other' is likely to have quite different standards of 'rationality'. By projecting onto the other our requirements of rationality, aren't we, ultimately, assuming that we are the yardstick,

and thus reinstating invidiousness, behind a façade of charitableness? Sperber, through a remarkable *tour de force*, involving a candid piece of self-analysis, undertakes to reverse this picture. The conceptual gaps and boundaries detected by relativists are not actually there; they are rather the product of the anthropologists' anxieties, due to their mixed feelings of guilt, superiority, and endangered self-identity:

> In pre-relativist anthropology, Westerners thought of themselves as superior to all other people. Relativism replaced this despicable hierarchical gap by a kind of cognitive apartheid. If we cannot be superior in the same world, let each people live in its own world. ... In retracing their steps, anthropologists transform into unfathomable gaps the shallow and irregular cultural boundaries that they had found not so difficult to cross, thereby protecting their own sense of identity, and providing their philosophical and lay audience with just what they want to hear (Sperber 1982: 179-180).

But if one goes psychoanalytical, one might as well accept Mary Douglas's (1978: xvii) diagnosis of the anti-relativist syndrome, for what it is worth: "The boundaries which philosophers rally instinctively to protect from the threat of relativism would seem to hedge something very sacred. ... Relativity would seem to sum up all the threats to our cognitive security".

In a less *ad hominem* vein (perhaps because they address another philosophical and lay audience) universalists may employ a more straightforward strategy in defense of our superiority. It consists in pointing to some second order or 'meta-level' property our culture possesses (and others not) that ensures comparability and also restores our epistemological (and moral) privilege. One such property may be our ability to engage in theoretical reflection and discourse: "...what is perhaps the crucial difference ... between Zande society and ours: we have this activity of theoretical understanding which seems to have no counterpart among them" (Taylor 1982: 89).[12] Another may be, as suggested by Popper, the fact that our culture has developed a 'critical tradition' that ensures our 'openness', as opposed to the 'closedness' of other cultures. Habermas (1984: 62ff.) contends that a distinction between openness and closedness can function as a "context-independent standard for the rationality of worldviews". When applied, such a standard unequivocally points to the superiority of the "modern way of understanding the world" over its "mythical" competitors. Furthermore, being open, the modern worldview is able to *contemplate* the possibility of there being other valuable and perhaps valid worldviews, which its closed competitors are unable to do. This fact

ensures that "the modern understanding of the world can claim universality" (Habermas 1984: 45). Paradoxically, then, it is by its being allegedly able to envisage the possibility of relativism that western culture vaccinates itself against such a dangerous virus, and reasserts its superiority.

Cultural relativism is perceived by rationalists as but one form of skepticism. The strategies described above are but a few of those they devised in their age old struggle against skepticism.[13] A recurrent motive in this struggle is the search for some secure ground, where skeptic arguments are ineffectual. Any given manifestation of rationality can be abandoned, if challenged by skepticism, in order to protect Reason as such from the attack. In this way, Reason metamorphoses itself in an ever more abstract, higher order, dispositional quality, unfathomable and hence indefeasible (or so they think). The trouble is that, as rationalism climbs higher, skepticism too learns to use the same ladder. Were the rationalists to throw away the ladder in order to avoid the skeptic's pursuit, they would thereby concede defeat, for without the means to go down and account for the world, Reason would condemn itself to the very closure and impotence it imputes to skepticism.

No wonder that the champions of post-modernity, tired of this Sisyphean escalation, and yet unable to ignore it altogether, seek to put an end to it. They propose a vision of a flat landscape, where all ladders and towers are meticulously and mercilessly deconstructed, and where no meta-narratives, methodologies, epistemologies — in short, Philosophy — can be erected, simply because the land has been deprived of its capacity to support foundations of any sort (cf. Dascal 1989a). In such a shallow flatland of perfect contingency — some of them claim — no boundary can be deep (or high) enough, whether it be between disciplines or between cultures, provided no one "looks for commensuration rather than simply continued conversation" (Rorty 1979: 376-377). In such a land where there is no room for the Philosophical ambition of establishing "a core self, the human essence, in all human beings" (Rorty 1989: 192), there is still room for "moral progress ... in the direction of greater human solidarity" (ibid.). In the absence, however, of 'humanity as such', solidarity can only be the identification with some given, contingent, 'we', i.e., it is always ethnocentric. "What takes the curse of this ethnocentrism" — Rorty contends — is that "it is the ethnocentrism of a 'we' ('we liberals') which is dedicated to enlarging itself, to creating an ever larger and more variegated *ethnos*. It is the 'we' of the people who have been brought up to distrust ethnocentrism" (Rorty 1989: 198). Once more, however, we have

run full circle around cultural space: having recognized that there is no way we can get out of our ethnocentrism, what makes us now commendable (though not 'superior', for — remember — we are in flatland) is our viewing our sphere as open to the others, along with a solemn oath "to keep trying to expand our sense of 'us' as far as we can" (Rorty 1989: 196).

Can we get out of space?

The western debate on relativism certainly has not come to a standstill. But, caught in a net of spatial metaphors, the positions in this debate become ever more entrenched (yet another spatial metaphor), and their holders cluster into philosophical tribes across which it is increasingly difficult to communicate. My impression is that we are past the threshold of diminishing returns, in this debate.[14] So far, attempts to get out of this deadlock have not been aware of the need to break away from the spatial mesh. Consequently, the alternative metaphors proposed are often plagued by the limitations imposed by their spatial sources.

Consider, for instance, perspectival metaphors (e.g., Hobart 1987: 44; Krishna 1988: 77ff.). Like their dialogical counterparts (e.g., Panikkar 1988), they suggest a model of inter-cultural (as well as intra-cultural and interpersonal) relations based on the ideas of the parity of all points of view and of the incompleteness of each. Each culture construes 'the world' in its own way, and it is allowed to do so because, ultimately, there is no 'one world' to be correctly construed. Everyone has something to learn from everybody else because no one can possess *the* only correct and complete knowledge. Progress in knowledge is achieved, then, through enhancing one's ability to shift points of view. Just as the individual constantly alternates between the positions of subject and object of comparison, of observer and observed, of teacher and pupil, of model and emulator, so too cultures should not commandeer any of these roles. If they do, they can eventually expand by conquering, converting or imposing their standards, but they thereby impair their ability to expand through genuine learning.

The trouble with this otherwise appealing picture is that perspectival space does not yield what the metaphor purports to extract from it. First of all, points of view are always *of* something: a city, a landscape, an object. Thus, rather than helping to conceive the cultural construction of worlds, the appeal

to points of view suggests the discovery or representation of a pre-existing world. Furthermore, although it is true that viewing an object through different perspectives is often useful to improve our grasp of the object, it is false that all points of view are on a par: some are clearly better than others for a given purpose. Finally, though there are mathematical transformations that allow for shifting perspectives (or, for that matter, coordinates), such transformations are not all equally simple and straightforward. It would thus seem that the inner logic of this particular spatial metaphor (just as that of the metaphors discussed in the preceding sections) leads to, rather than prevents, invidious comparison.

But the main problem of perspectivism — as well as of the other idealized metaphors we discussed — is that they do not fit the harsh realities of the planet. The world we — and our cultures — live in is one of conflict and competition. *Pace* Popper, living cultures are not pieces in the Popperian 'Third World' museum of abstract entities, where defeat does not inflict suffering to the loser (cf. Popper 1972: 106ff.; see Chapter 20). They are those traditions actual people live by; and actual people, 'Second' and 'First' world people, require actual space and physical resources to maintain their living cultures. No doubt cultures have learned (and still do) from each other. But learning, in this conflictual world, is valuable in so far as it supports the primary goals of survival and expansion, rather than for its own sake. In this planet there is no parity among cultures: there are the dominant and the dominated, the powerful and the powerless, the ones that impose standards and the ones that seek desperately to emulate them. Just as an 'ideal speech situation' of perfect symmetry between all validity claims of speakers and hearers that respect each other is a nice regulative idea that never obtains in practice, so too the parity and detachment of cultural perspectivism is a fiction that does not exist even in the well-intentioned and interest-free temple of pure comparative philosophy (cf. Krishna 1988: 72-79). In order to fit this world, maybe our models must, after all, unabashedly abandon the rational beauty of classical optics and cinematics and plunge into the dirty waters of dynamics, of force and friction. Perhaps we must, with Foucault, admit that all there is is power.

At any rate, in such an imperfect world, it is the asymmetry of the contingent but all too real domination one culture exerts over the others that must call our attention. Yet, rather than trying to justify and explain the superiority that allegedly engendered this asymmetry and the entitlements that ensue

upon it, what should be stressed is the responsibility it bestows on us vis-à-vis other cultures: *the duty to protect them against ourselves*. If indeed we are on the verge of the appearance of a 'new order' in the planet, all those seriously concerned with the issues raised by cultural diversity — universalists, pluralists or whatever — should not forfeit the opportunity to include in the world's agenda, with the high priority it deserves, the fulfilment of this duty.

Notes

1. There are exceptions to this rule. An example is Hallpike (1979), whose apologetic preface, however, confirms the rule. He reminds anthropologists that the term 'primitive' derives from the Latin 'primitivus', meaning "of or belonging to the first age, period, or stage" and contends that "as such [it] has no derogatory implications whatsoever" (v). But words do not usually preserve their etymological purity. In fact, Hallpike's thesis can be seen as an attempt to grant scientific respectability to the negative connotation embedded in current usage. For he purports to show that a society that is primitive in the sense of having retained features "that are inherently characteristic of the early stages of human society" (ibid.) is also a society whose members' thought processes have not evolved beyond those of the early stages of psychological development.

2. The controversy around Isaac La Peyrère's 'pre-Adamite' theory attests to this (see Popkin 1987). By the way, this theory is itself an example of invidiousness, since it places the Amerindians, the Chinese, the South Sea Islanders and others outside the scope of the most meaningful line of human development — biblical history. This did not prevent La Peyrère from claiming to be a "universal humanitarian" who insisted that "everyone, pre-Adamites, Adamites and post-Adamites, would be saved when the Messianic fulfilment of Jewish history took place" (Popkin 1987: 70).

3. In this paragraph, I italicize the first occurrence of each of the spatial terms employed.

4. The quote is from the tenth century Arabic tale "The case of the animals versus man before the king of the Jinn" (Goodman 1978: 56).

5. The assignment to animal species of limited spheres of activity coupled with the skills appropriate to survive in their environments, which has become central in the present-day notion of ecological niche, is a very old topos, related to the idea of a well-ordered created world. It is a recurrent motive in the Arabic tale referred to above. I thank Lenn Goodman for bringing this fact to my attention.

6. A convenient characterization of cultural relativism is this: "...the position which begins with value relativism — the view that each set of values, including moral values, is as valid as each other set — and draws the conclusion that no society has a right to attempt to change or otherwise interfere with any other society" (Krausz and Meiland 1982: 7).

7. Universalists, of course, cast doubt on the meaningfulness of this widespread relativist metaphor. See, for instance, Sperber (1982: 168-169).

8. "Clifford Geertz's study of the symbolism of the Balinese state blissfully ignored the categories Balinese actually use, or even the possibility that they might not conform to his" (Hobart 1987:36). And, more aggressively: "Despite their ostensible differences, Bloch and Geertz are intellectual bedfellows. Their stated commitment to ethnography disguises a massive burden of *a priori* assumptions. Both assume, for instance, the psychic unity of mankind and the ultimate adequacy of Western reason and (positivist) ontology to explain culture and all its variations. Both assume a Cartesian dichotomy of mind and body..." (ibid.:45-46).

9. "Benjamin Lee Whorf advances the claim that Hopi metaphysics differs radically from all western metaphysical views, and he does so by describing Hopi syntax and semantics, and consequent Hopi metaphysics — in English. Clifford Geertz makes the rather foreign concepts of Arabic *hagg*, Malaysian *patut*, and others, eminently intelligible to us — in English" (Rosemont 1988:49). In a more cautious statement of this view, Beattie (1984:19) contends that "even if perfect understanding of another culture ... is unattainable, we all know that we can get a long way, or at least some way, towards it, and many good ethnographic studies offer evidence of this".

10. For a recent evaluation of the evidence pro and contra Whorf's hypothesis, see Schlesinger (1991).

11. See Lewis (1974), Davidson (1973), and Chapter 15b.

12. As against this presumption, Hobart (1987:41) warns: "Some cultures have their own highly developed views on such matters as language or comparison. Ignoring such sources at times looks dangerously like intellectual arrogance". And he goes on to describe the elaborate Balinese vocabulary for different forms of comparison.

13. For an analysis of these and other strategies, see Dascal 1990a.

14. Clearly one cannot regard 'western culture' (and maybe other cultures as well) as monolithic. It is perhaps a federation of two cultures, as suggested by C. P. Snow (1963), of three (Geertz 1983:21), or of an "enormous multiplicity" (ibid.:161) of traditions (Neville 1989:15), streams (Berenson 1984:51), or cultural orientations. Nevertheless, these orientations, sub-cultures and philosophical tribes display enough of a family resemblance in order to make talk of a 'western culture' not entirely inaccurate.

Part III: Meeting the alternatives

Chapter 22

Why should I ask her?

Is language-use a reliable indicator of what goes on a person's mind? Is it more reliable than other possible indicators? If so, why? These are the questions to which I want to address myself here.

A few words are necessary in order to explain my interest in these questions. Several traditions converge in suggesting a negative answer to them. Firstly, the centuries-old criticism of language and its use. From Bacon's 'idols of the marketplace', through Spinoza's view of language-use as yielding, at best, the lowest kind of 'knowledge' — which hardly deserves that name — namely, 'knowledge by hearsay', to analytic philosophy's demise of metaphysics as stemming from the misuse of words. Secondly, anti-mentalist tendencies of all kinds: if there is no such a thing as the mind and mental phenomena, the very question of what — if anything — is a reliable indicator of mental phenomena is meaningless. The more so if, as some anti-mentalists claim, the mental is nothing but language-use itself. Thirdly, the increasing awareness of the endless ways in which we can manipulate language in order to conceal rather than to reveal what we have in mind — lying and playacting being only their archaic prototypes. Fourthly, the development of methods to overcome the shortcomings of language as the high road to another's person mind: language-independent psychological and neurophysiological probes (e.g., the "lie-detector" — and perhaps soon the use of magnetic resonance brain scanners) and psycho-analytic techniques which, though relying on the patient's verbal behavior, take it only as 'raw material' for further interpretation, rather than as a source of direct insight into the patient's mental states.

Yet, these obstacles notwithstanding, language-use is still regarded as the most reliable means we have to know what is going on in the minds of our fellow humans. When in doubt about someone's beliefs, desires, fears, or wonderings, we normally don't think there is a better way of finding out than simply to ask her. When confronted with non-linguistic behavior that we want to interpret, we often wish we could address a direct question to the agent and obtain an answer ("If only I could ask the baby why she is crying").

And when we succeed in interpreting non-linguistic behavior, we compare it to linguistic behavior ("I understand this dog so well. It is as if he were speaking to me").

Not only commonsense holds this view. A psychologist whose main concern is the fact that most people don't really get to know even those persons who are closest to them, and believes to have found a solution to this problem — in his words, "a key to the lock of the portal to man's soul" (Jourard 1965: 9-10), describes this key as "self-disclosure", i.e., as the information "a person will *tell* another person about himself" (ibid.; italics mine). And in order to study self-disclosure he uses a *questionnaire* through which subjects are requested to *report* how much, about what personal subjects, and to whom they *talk*. Similarly, many philosophers — who are otherwise very careful about their handling of linguistic matters — do not hesitate to endorse the reliability of the "ask her" strategy. Thus, Bruce Aune (1967: 199) asserts that "the best way to obtain certainty (sic!) about someone's intentions is to ask him". And Rudolf Carnap (1956: 230), somewhat more cautiously claims that

> a sentence like (i) 'John believes that the earth is round' is to be interpreted in such a way that it can be inferred from a suitable sentence describing John's behavior at best with probability, but not with certainty, e.g., from (ii) 'John makes an affirmative response to 'the earth is round' as an English sentence'.

But how is this possible? Linguistic behavior is, after all, external, observable behavior. Its connection with what goes on in the agent's mind requires inferences, which are no less problematic — on the face of it — than those involved in the interpretation of other forms of behavior. Furthermore, the strategy of "asking the agent" instead of solving the general problem will in fact pose an additional difficulty. For, not only will whatever the agent answers be in need of interpretation by us before it yields the correct ascription of mental state(s): our own question will have to be interpreted by the agent before he produces his answer.[1] The problem is not only that of interpreting the content-specifying sentence (e.g., *The earth is round*), but also of determining the real import of the speaker's response. For *pace* Carnap, Quine (1960: 29ff) and Davidson (1975: 14ff), affirmative (or negative) responses, assent (or dissent), and holding (or not) a sentence to be true are attitudes of a speaker that are assigned to him on the basis of interpretation of his behavior, just as the content of what he assents to is.

Why — in spite of so many difficulties — is the belief in the transparency of linguistic behavior so robust? Are there any reasons for singling out

the interpretation of utterances as a more reliable process than the interpretation of other kinds of behavior? I believe there are. And I believe that discussing them is illuminating because they lie at the intersection of at least three philosophical disciplines: the philosophy of action, the philosophy of language and the philosophy of mind. In fact, in order to see at least some of these reasons, all that has to be done is to put together some insights of these three disciplines.

I will confine the discussion to what Searle calls "Intentional" mental states, exemplified by beliefs, desires, hopes, fears, intentions, etc. Traditionally, the Intentionality of such states has been vaguely described as their being "directed at" objects or states of affairs: a belief *that* such and such, a fear *of* something, etc. Searle proposes to characterize this property by saying that a mental state is Intentional if "the specification of the content of that mental state requires the specification of some object or state of affairs which is not identical with that mental state" (Searle 1979a: 182). This excludes pains and aches, some sorts of anxiety, and perhaps also some emotions. Though admittedly vague, such a criterion of Intentionality is quite helpful for our purposes: in fact, Searle's non-Intentional mental states seem to be most reliably accessible (for an external observer) not through linguistic behavior, but rather through some other form of behavior (e.g., screaming). The privileged indicative status of linguistic behavior, therefore, should be claimed to hold only — if at all — for Intentional states. In order to assess this claim, linguistic behavior must be compared with other behavior that may also be plausibly claimed to be related to and indicative of Intentional states. And the best candidates are, of course, non-linguistic intentional actions (e.g., polishing one's shoes, buying a car, etc.),[2] which are usually taken to be based on such Intentional states as beliefs, desires, and intentions. Isn't brushing one's shoes after anointing them with cream, in normal circumstances, a good indication of one's belief that the cream is shoe-polish, perhaps even a better one than one's statement 'This is shoe polish'?

A few details of Searle's account of intentional action will be useful to proceed in our comparison, even though the argument does not rely on the acceptance of this account (see also Chapter 5). He characterizes an Intentional state as a complex entity of the form S(r), where S is a variable for 'psychological mode' (e.g., hope, fear, belief, desire) and r a variable for 'representative content'. Some, but not all, Intentional states have, according to him, a 'direction of fit' (mind-to-world or world-to mind), and "all Inten-

tional states with a direction of fit represent their conditions of satisfaction" (Searle 1981:79).[3] An intention is an Intentional state having a direction of fit, and an intentional action is characterized as "simply the realization of the conditions of satisfaction of an intention" (ibid.). Such conditions of satisfaction must specify not only the event that is to occur (e.g., one's arm going up) but also the demand that the event occur by virtue of the intention. For, if that very same movement occurs, say, by the effect of invisible strings that pull the arm, it cannot count as satisfying the intention. Nor is it enough to have the 'prior intention' to perform it. Between the 'mere' movement and the prior intention, Searle points out the need to acknowledge the existence of an 'intention in action' — which he equates with the 'experience of acting', without which it is impossible to characterize an intentional action. Both intentions must be self-referential, but whereas a prior intention makes reference to the whole action [its content being: "(I perform the action of raising my arm by *way* of carrying out this intention)"], an intention in action makes reference only to one component of the action, namely the physical movement [its content being: "(My arm goes up as a result of this intention in action)"]. According to Searle, anything that qualifies as an action must have an intention-in-action as one of its components, but it may or may not have a prior intention. To say that it does have one is to say that it causes the intention in action, which in turn causes the movement.

Now, speech acts and semiotic actions in general are, of course, intentional actions. Hence, their conditions of satisfaction are self-referential in the way described above. Yet, they possess a further type of self-reference, which is not shared by other intentional actions. Their distinctive character is that they are intended to produce certain effects in an audience by virtue of the audience's *recognition* of such an intention. Recall Grice's analysis of 'speaker's meaning':

> 'A meant something by x' is (roughly) equivalent to 'A intended the utterance of x to produce some effect in an audience by means of the recognition of this intention' (Grice 1967:46).

Only if the utterance of x is caused by such an intention can it be regarded as a speech act. Furthermore, it would be appropriate to call this intention a 'disclosure intention', since, through it, the speaker seeks to disclose to the audience at least one of his mental states, namely, that intention itself. To be sure, he may fail in this endeavor: the audience may not be able to recognize

the intention, or the desired effect in the audience may not be produced. But this does in the least affect the fact that there is an intrinsic, necessary connection between performing a speech act or another semiotic action and intending to have at least one of one's Intentional states disclosed to another person.[4]

Of course, no such necessary connection characterizes non-semiotic intentional actions. The intentional action of polishing my shoes does not, normally, contain the intention that someone should recognize any intention of mine whatsoever. But, just as this does not prevent someone from achieving such a recognition by observing my polishing behavior, and thereby disclosing some of my mental states, so too, as we have seen, the fact that semiotic actions necessarily contain self-disclosure intentions does not ensure that some addressee takes advantage of them. It seems, then, that invoking this particular characteristic of semiotic actions does not show that they are better indicators of mental states than their competitors.

Upon reflection, however, this fact turns out to be significant for our problem. Though it is by no means sure that communicative intentions will always be correctly recognized by the addressee, it would be strange if the odds were, in general, against their being so recognized. For, in that case, one would rightly ask why in the hell would so many people perform actions based on (communicative) intentions that are rarely — if at all — successful. If this were indeed the case, one would expect either the progressive disappearance of this kind of actions, or else the development of means to increase dramatically their chances of success. We all know, of course, that evolution has taken the latter course. Foremost among the means available to foster successful recognition and interpretation of communicative intentions is the heuristics of pragmatic interpretation, which makes full use of all kinds of information (such as syntactic, semantic, pragmatic-semantic, as well as paralinguistic and other contextual information).[5] By means of the heuristics of pragmatic interpretation, addressees are likely (but by no means certain) to hit upon the speaker's meaning underlying an utterance, and thus to disclose — via the speaker's linguistic behavior — at least a few of the latter's Intentional states. Since no such heuristics is available for actions other than semiotic actions, the privileged status of semiotic behavior in general and linguistic behavior in particular as reliable indicators of mental states is explained.

Let's now go back and ask whether the communicative intentions are intentions in action or prior intentions. If we take seriously Searle's definition of intentions in action as those that refer to a physical movement, communi-

cative intentions cannot be of this kind. According to this view, the intentions in action involved in linguistic utterances would be those pertaining to the emission of sounds by activating the vocal tract. By an effort of imagination we can strip these movements from their communicative intentions, but we have no natural way to describe them. Practically every available verb that applies to speech-behavior — uttering, saying, asserting, asking, requesting, ordering, etc. — presumes the presence of a communicative intention. This is not surprising, since we know that (pure) syntax is possible only as the result of abstraction from semantics and pragmatics. What this suggests, however, is that, though perhaps not strictly belonging to the level of the intention in action, communicative intentions are very close to that level. Utterances are literally *perceived* as bearing such intentions.[6] If so, such intentions are, in a sense, directly accessible in linguistic behavior, and do not require a complex inferential process in order to be detected. To be sure, non-linguistic and non-semiotic actions may also be 'perceived' and most naturally described in such a way, i.e., *sub specie intentionalitatis*. We normally *see* the upward movement of his arm as his raising of the arm. But this is precisely the level of the intention in action, whose content is: (his arm goes up as a result of this intention). On the other hand, if one describes one's action as waving goodbye, voting, or requesting permission to go to the bathroom, one seems to be already jumping to the level of 'further' intentions, comparable to those one reaches when interpretations, distinct from the intention in action and yet close enough to it in order to be, literally, 'perceived', rather than inferred from the physical movement. In this, again, a person's linguistic behavior seems to provide a more direct and easy access to a wider range of her intentions.

Since philosophers are not very fond of arguments that seem to rely on empirical observations, statistical generalizations, and the like (though my argument only *seems* to be of this kind), let me conclude with a purely conceptual argument. Searle has claimed that, in general, a speech act with a propositional content "is an expression of the corresponding Intentional state" (e.g., stating that p one *expresses* the belief that p, etc.). Furthermore, he says,

> the expression of the Intentional state is not a mere accompaniment: there is an internal connection in the strict sense between the performance of the speech act and the expression of the corresponding psychological state as is shown by

> Moore's paradox. One cannot say, 'It's raining but I don't believe it's raining', or 'I order you to leave but I don't want you to leave'... (Searle 1979c: 192).

I would like to use this thesis — assuming it is correct — in order to develop two further arguments in support of the claim that linguistic behavior is a privileged indicator of mental states, namely: (a) linguistic behavior reveals not only the communicative intentions of the speaker, but also other 'more central' mental states of his, i.e., the beliefs, desires, etc. 'expressed' by that behavior; and (b) non-linguistic intentional behavior differs from linguistic behavior in that it does not display the same kind of conceptual connection (i.e., 'expression') with the agent's psychological states. For this reason, even though it allows for the interference of such states, it does so only in a more remote and indirect way than its linguistic counterpart.

There are, however, some difficulties with these arguments, which must be overcome.[7] The problem with (a) stems from the fact that, in Searle's terms, "one can express an Intentional state one does not have" (ibid.), which is how insincerity arises. Now, if the 'expression' of an Intentional state does not guarantee that the speaker is in fact in that state, it would seem that invoking the relation of expression is useless in order to support the claim that the addressee can infer such states directly from the speaker's utterances. In order to overcome this difficulty, observe first that Searle's use of the term 'expression' is somewhat strange. For that term (as others of the same family such as 'manifestation', 'disclosure', etc.) involves normally an existential presupposition: If A expresses (discloses, reveals. etc.) x, x should exist (at least as an 'idea' or 'state' of A). Strictly speaking, such a presupposition would preclude the use of the term 'expression' in cases of insincerity. In order to be able to employ it as he does, Searle could envisage two alternatives: (i) to reduce the force of the existential presupposition; or (ii) to modify the description of the psychological states allegedly 'expressed' in utterances. Let us consider them in turn.

The adoption of (i) would yield the following explication of the relation of 'expression': by asserting p, A expresses his belief, without however fully *committing* himself to that suggestion (see Chapter 7). Such a 'suggestion' can be cancelled out without contradiction (this explains the fact that Moore's paradox is not a *logical* paradox). The psychological state 'expressed' in an utterance would be, on this view, 'implicit' in what is said, just as the idea of the general dishonesty of Republicans is implicit in the assertion "He is a Republican, but honest". To express a belief without actually holding it would

be only a case of violating a pragmatic norm of communication, which makes one accountable not only for what one explicitly says, but also for what one's words imply.

Another way (ii) of solving the problem is to say that, since — strictly speaking — one cannot express a belief one does not actually have, what one does express is a 'similar' or 'related' psychological state. For example, one might say that what the sincere or insincere assertion of p expresses is the *belief-type* "belief that p". The question of whether such a type is indeed instantiated by a token in A is precisely the question of whether he is sincere or not, a question which, as we know, can only be solved with the help of the heuristics of pragmatic interpretation. Assuming a general 'presumption of sincerity' (obviously a *pragmatic* principle), one could move — in the absence of indications to the contrary — from the state-types expressed in utterances to their corresponding tokens, i.e., to the actual *occurrence* of such states in the speaker, which are in fact the constituents of his 'mental life'.

Now, whatever the alternative chosen, the ascription of an actual mental state to the speaker is not purely semantic (or logical); it could never be, since pragmatic interpretation is always necessary (cf. Dascal 1983: 77ff). Yet, such an ascription is facilitated and made so to speak more direct by the existence of the *semantic* relation of expression. Whether implicit (as in (i)) or explicit (as in (ii)), such a relation is 'semantic' because it is conventionally attached to the utterance (cf. Dascal 1983: 22-40). The addressee is directly guided by that which is expressed in the utterance in his search for its pragmatic interpretation, much like he is guided by the nature of a deictic in his search for contextual elements that are appropriate to fill in the 'semantic gaps' the deictic leaves open in sentence meaning.

It remains to be seen — moving now to argument (b) — whether something of that sort does not occur also in non-linguistic intentional behavior. Suppose someone goes through the mechanics of polishing his shoes with a certain cream and then points to the cream and says: "I don't believe this is shoe polish". Apparently this is similar to Moore's paradox. Something is evidently wrong, for the man's act seems to be self-defeating. If the cream is shoe polish his belief (taking his utterance to be sincere) that it is not indicates perhaps a lack of knowledge of what is shoe polish. If it is not, we can interpret the situation either (1) by denying that he has the intention of polishing his shoes and ascribing to him other intentions (e.g., playacting, playing, exercising, etc.), or (2) by denying him knowledge of the instrumental conditions of

shoe polishing, or else (3) by contesting his rationality. It is by virtue of the *causal* relation between shoe polish and shoe polishing that we can infer that whoever polishes shoes believes he is using shoe polish, but not by virtue of some *rule* that necessarily makes of the act of shoe polishing an expression of that belief. Such an inference does not substantially differ from the inference that someone has the measles based on the observation that his body is full of red spots. If someone has all the symptoms of a disease and does not in fact have it, obviously something is 'wrong'. In both cases, if a 'paradox' arises, it is because a *regularity,* well grounded in experience, is violated. But in the linguistic case, such a regularity (which also exists) is mediated by some *rule*. To utter something is to obey such a rule and to show one is so doing. It is the attempt to suppress the automatic inference authorized by such a display of obedience to the rule that produces the paradoxical effect in Moore's paradox, to which nothing corresponds in the shoe polisher's 'paradox'. And It is precisely this fact that shows how in one case a mental state is conveyed in a much more direct way than in the other.

For all these reasons — and there are more (see Dascal 1983) — you should not hesitate: go ahead and ask her!

Notes

1. Trying to make our questions more explicit, by employing terms that directly refer to the mental states in question will not do, since our questions will then, in all likelihood, be interpreted indirectly, rather than transparently. Compare "Did you see Ernest leaving the house?" and "Do you believe you saw Ernest leaving the house?". The latter is likely to be understood as questioning the grounds or the firmness of the belief, rather than just inquiring about whether one has the belief or not. The problems pointed here and below with the "ask her" strategy illustrate the general problem of "imputing" to some person, organism or machine a mental state on the basis of their behavior (see Dascal 1989b).

2. Notice the small "i" here: an intention with a small "i" is but one of the species of Intentional — with capital "I" — states.

3. 'Conditions of satisfaction' is a generic term for states of affairs or things whose actual existence 'satisfies' an Intentional state with a direction of fit. For example, if I believe it is raining and it is raining, my belief is true (i.e., it is 'satisfied'); if I want you to run and you do so, my wish is fulfilled (i.e., it is 'satisfied'), and so on.

4. My use of Grice's notion of speaker's meaning is independent of the acceptance or rejection of his attempt to make of it the foundation of semantics, since I am using it only as a pragmatic notion (see Chapter 1).

5. For details and discussion see Dascal (1983).

6. Cf. McDowell's (1980) parallel between understanding and perception.

7. I wish to thank Paulo E. Faria for pointing out to me these difficulties.

8. In what follows I will restrict myself to the case of assertions, in order to illustrate the treatment here proposed.

Chapter 23

Speech act theory and pragmatics
An uneasy couple

I

Two contributions to the philosophy of language have been extremely influential in the development of pragmatics: Searle's speech-acts theory and Grice's analysis of conversation. The relationship they bear to each other is very close, but not entirely free from conflicts that occasionally emerge. Over the years, I came to suspect that, behind the petty quarrels that often arise between close relatives, there may lie some serious divergences, hampering the harmony of a marriage all pragmaticists wish to be happy and fruitful. Unfortunately, such a wish has led pragmaticists to overlook the import of these divergences. Bringing them to light — I believe — will help to correct some confusions, to improve mutual understanding, and to promote peace in the pragmatic family.

In this chapter, I will examine one set of related differences between the two approaches that can — as I will try to show — be traced back to a single source. In the Prolegomena to his William James Lectures on "Logic and Conversation", Grice declares that he is "in sympathy with the general character of Searle's method" of dealing with a certain problem, but adds that he is "not entirely happy about the details of his [Searle's] position" (Grice 1989: 15).[1] This divergence "about the details" — I will argue — amounts in fact to quite different conceptions about the tasks and form of a suitable pragmatic theory, about the division of labor between pragmatics and semantics, and about other issues. It certainly deserves to be examined in detail.

In order to understand the problem that both Searle and Grice address, we must recall their philosophical background. Both of them come from the tradition of 'philosophical analysis' of the 'ordinary language' brand. Within this tradition, philosophically interesting concepts — such as knowledge, reality, goodness, free will — are investigated via the study of the 'logical grammar' of the key terms that ordinarily express them — e.g., 'know', 'real',

'good', 'voluntarily'. By examining the conditions under which one can or cannot say, for instance, 'I know my name', 'She has a real job', 'This is a good movie', 'He came voluntarily', one would discover important facts about the meanings of the key terms and thereby of the concepts they express. For example, by noticing that in the phrase 'real job' in the above sentence 'real' is normally understood as marking a contrast between the job referred to and some occupation that is deficient in some respect (e.g., in that it is intermittent, unrewarding, has little or no monetary compensation, etc.), and by observing that this is true of many other sentences containing 'real', one concludes that the meaning of the adjective 'real', unlike that of 'blue', has nothing to do with attributing some substantive property to the thing denoted by the noun it modifies; recognition of this fact, in turn, would be an important step towards getting rid of old tangles about the nature of reality. Using this kind of procedure — it was expected — philosophy would acquire a sort of empirical method, based on the analysis of linguistic phenomena, through which traditional philosophical puzzles would either be solved or dissolved.

Searle and Grice, however, questioned the assumptions underlying this method. The method consists in inferring that a certain condition characterizes the *meaning* of a word or phrase from the fact that this condition is required for the appropriate *use* of certain sentences containing that word or phrase. But inappropriateness in the use of a sentence can be due to reasons other than the non-satisfaction of some meaning condition of one of its words or phrases. In particular, these reasons may have to do with general conditions on the use of language, such as the requirement that what one asserts should be informative. Thus, the oddity of saying 'He came voluntarily' in a context where there is no reason to suspect he was dragged or otherwise forced to come could be explained in terms of its failure to convey new information; in normal circumstances, it is no news that somebody has control over his actions. In this respect, 'He came voluntarily' (said in the above mentioned context) is just as odd as 'He came wearing a hat' (said in a context where all males wear hats) or even from 'He came' (said in a context where it is obvious to speaker and addressee that he came). But such an oddity does not necessarily reveal features of the meanings of 'wearing a hat', 'came' or 'voluntarily'.

Both Grice and Searle attribute the failure of the analytic philosophers' ['A-philosophers', for short] maneuver to their implicit acceptance of the slogan "Meaning is use". This slogan, Searle argues, is useless as an analytic tool, because the notion of use is too vague (Searle 1969: 146);[2] it offers "no

way of distinguishing features of the utterance which are due solely to the occurrence of the [analyzed] word from features which are due to other characteristics of the sentences or to other extraneous factors altogether" (Searle 1969:147). Grice too sees the Wittgensteinian slogan as the culprit and proposes to replace it by the cautionary precept "be careful not to confuse meaning and use" (Grice 1989:4). Since the application of this precept requires a distinction between meaning and use, Grice's primary concern is "to determine how any such distinction ... is to be determined" (ibid.) — a concern shared by Searle, of course (cf. Searle 1969:154).

Both also agree that to fulfill this task, a *systematic* theory of language is needed (Searle 1969:149; Grice 1989:4). Searle believes he has already developed the systematic theory required to handle the phenomena uncovered in the maneuver (Searle 1969:149). Grice, in his characteristic low key, declares that he "shall be forced to take some tottering steps" (Grice 1989:4) in the direction of formulating the required theory. Searle's systematic theory is speech act theory. He considers the successful application of the theory to the explanation of the phenomena in question as a confirmation of the theory. Grice's steps lead him to elaborate a number of concepts for the analysis of conversation — such as the Principle of Cooperation, the Maxims, and the notion of implicature. He takes for granted that such concepts can be successfully applied to explain the phenomena uncovered by the A-philosophers' maneuver; but he does not endeavor to do so; his concern is rather to apply them to a broader range of phenomena.

Although both Grice and Searle make use of each other's theories and although their purposes are similar, they in fact propose quite different ways of distinguishing and relating meaning and use. As a result, their ways of making these two notions more precise diverge widely and lead in fact to two different ways of conceiving pragmatics, semantics, and their mutual relations. These 'big' differences, I surmise, are already operative in their different ways of handling the philosophical maneuver they both criticize. Seen in this light, the divergent orientation of the two projects can be better understood.

II

Searle's onslaught against the A-philosophers' maneuver is blunt: he contends that it is a fallacious move. He analyzes three kinds of fallacy of this sort, traces

all of them to the lack of a clear distinction between meaning and use, and offers alternative explanations of the data in terms of speech act theory.

The 'naturalistic fallacy' consists in the claim that "it is logically impossible for any set of statements of the kind usually called descriptive to entail a statement of the kind usually called evaluative" (Searle 1969: 132). The claim is based on the observation that to pronounce an evaluation (e.g., 'This is an Extra Fancy Grade apple') is quite different from asserting that something satisfies the criteria justifying such an evaluation ('This apple has characteristics A, B, and C'). Searle admits the difference, but contends that it is a difference in the *illocutionary force of the utterances* of the two sentences: the former characteristically serves to grade the apple; the latter, to describe it. But from this fact, he argues, one cannot infer that the *proposition* expressed in one of the utterances cannot entail the *proposition* expressed in the other. For "entailment is a matter of meaning" (154), and the meaning of 'Extra Fancy Grade' is fixed, in this case, by the Ministry of Agriculture's definition of this expression in terms of the characteristics A, B, and C; this, in turn, determines the truth conditions of the propositions expressed by the two sentences as well as their logical relations. Nevertheless, their illocutionary forces differ, because, in the first case it is "a matter of the use of the special terms the sentence contains", namely 'Extra Fancy Grade', which was "introduced so that apple sorters would have a special term for use in grading apples" (154-155). What explains (and corrects) the fallacy in this case, then, is a "distinction between meaning and use [that] involves a distinction between truth conditions on the one hand and purpose or function on the other" (154).

The 'speech act fallacy' consists in explaining the meaning of a word in terms of the fact that its use (in present tense indicative sentences) characteristically serves to perform a certain speech act. This is a fallacious move because it violates the requirement that if a certain feature belongs to the meaning of an expression, it should be present wherever the expression occurs.[3] Thus, if the condition "performance of the speech act of commendation" is part of the meaning of 'good', then every (literal) occurrence of 'good' should involve the performance of that act or at least be related to performances of that act "in a way which is purely a function of the way the sentences uttered stands in relation to the standard indicative sentences, in the utterance of which the act is performed. If they are in the past tense, then the act is reported in the past; if they are hypothetical, then the act is hypothesized, etc." (Searle 1969: 138). But this is plainly false, Searle contends, for 'It used to be good' is not equivalent to

'I used to commend it', 'If that movies is good, then its director deserves the Academy Award' is not equivalent to 'If I commend that movies, then its director deserves the Academy Award', etc.

Although he rejects the speech act analysis of the meaning of words such as 'good', Searle wants to preserve the intuition that the meaning of such words *is* somehow connected with the performance of specific speech acts. He insists that such a connection is not "just a contingent fact" (Searle 1969: 150) but rather "a matter of conceptual truth" (151) or a "quasi-necessary truth" (152).[4] But his explanation of this intuition is quite puzzling. He says that 'good' is a "grading label", one of a range of terms used for the purpose of performing acts of assessing, grading, evaluating, judging, etc. Furthermore, the assessment it serves to perform is positive, i.e., it is such that it might be expressed by illocutionary verbs such as 'commend', 'praise', etc. So, 'good' is "embedded in the institutions" of assessing, grading, evaluating, etc. in a particular way. This is why calling something good is commending. But, Searle contends, to admit this is not to say what the meaning of 'good' is, because "the connection between the meaning of 'good' and the performance of the speech act of commendation, *though a necessary one*, is thus a connection at one remove" (Searle 1969: 152; my italics). This is puzzling because the connection is described, in the same paragraph, as both 'quasi-necessary' and 'necessary'. Now, if it is necessary (at whatever number of 'removes'), then it is a matter of meaning, not of use, since "entailment is a matter of meaning". If so, the connection with commending does, after all, pertain to the meaning of 'good', contrary to Searle's claim. We will return to this puzzle below.

The 'assertion fallacy' consists in "confusing the conditions for the performance of the speech act of assertion with the analysis of the meaning of particular words occurring in certain assertions" (Searle 1969: 141). According to Searle, the oddity of *saying*, in ordinary circumstances, things such as 'He came voluntarily' has nothing to do with the concept expressed by 'voluntarily', just as the oddity of saying (in ordinary circumstances) 'He is breathing' has nothing do with the concept of breathing. Both assertions are odd because, in standard or normal circumstances, their truth is obvious. What they infringe is a condition of "what it is to make an assertion" (144). Speech act theory treats this condition as a *preparatory condition*, shared by the "information bearing class of speech acts (reports, descriptions, assertions, etc.)". One of its formulations is: "it must not be too obviously the case to both S[peaker] and H[earer] that p — if the assertion that p is to be non-defective"

(149). Since, for Searle, in making an assertion one *implies* the satisfaction of its preparatory conditions, whoever asserts, say, 'He came voluntarily' thereby implies that the context is not normal (for in a normal context the truth of the assertion would be obvious); if this is not the case, then his assertion is defective. The oddity observed by the A-philosopher is thus explained by the disjunction: either the context is not normal or the assertion of p in that context is defective.

Unlike the case of the 'speech act fallacy', there is no intuition about the 'quasi-necessary' connection of a particular word with a speech act to be preserved here. The data are therefore explained quite generally by appeal to one of the *rules* of assertion-making and to a general *presumption* of normality. Notice that, while the former is 'embedded' in the institution of asserting, since it is one of its constitutive rules, the latter is not. It belongs rather to the general background of *any* use of language.[5] As for the non-obviousness condition, Searle acknowledges that "it runs through so many kinds of illocutionary acts that I think it is not a matter of separate rules for the utterance of particular illocutionary-force indicating devices at all, but rather is a general condition on illocutionary acts ... to the effect that the act is defective if the point to be achieved by the satisfaction of the essential condition is already achieved" (Searle 1969: 69). Nevertheless, he still treats it as a *rule*, albeit a general one, that bears on whether an illocutionary act is *defective* or not. In Grice's system, on the other hand, this 'rule' becomes one of the Maxims (roughly, the Maxim of Quantity).[6] As such, it is, like the condition of normality, a *presumption*, derived from the general presumption of cooperation in communicative behavior. This difference in status of the non-obviousness (and other) condition(s) is significant, for it marks Searle's preference for treating conditions of use in terms of strict logical relations, as opposed to Grice's tendency to treat them in another way. We shall return to this topic below.

Consider now the puzzle about the quasi-necessary connection between 'good' and the act of commending. What is supposed to explain the quasi-necessary character of the connection and hence the claim that it is not a matter of meaning but of use is the fact that it is mediated by the 'embedding' of an expression in a class of illocutionary 'institutions'. Spelling out the nature of such institutions is the cornerstone of Searle's theory of speech act. This is done through the enumeration of the *necessary* conditions for performing a specific type of speech act. Such conditions are the *constitutive rules*

for the correct performance of the act (Searle 1969: 65ff). If the act is correctly performed, this *implies* that the rules have been followed, i.e., that the conditions have been satisfied. The institutional facts about speech acts consist, therefore, in a network of *analytic* relations, i.e., *conceptual truths*.[7] But they are not truths about the meanings of particular expressions, except perhaps about the meanings of the *names* of speech acts, such as 'request', 'promise', 'assertion'. For the theory is not about labels or linguistic expressions. It is a general theory about what is required for an act to count as a specific move in the game of speaking, regardless of the particular expressions used in performing the moves or even of the ways different languages provide "different conventional realizations of the same underlying rule" (39).

Now, what does it mean to say that an expression is 'embedded' in the institution that defines a speech act? Presumably, that its *raison d'être* is to be a linguistic realization of (part of) that speech act's constitutive rules. Thus, performative verbs serve primarily as linguistic realizations of illocutionary points; similarly, expressions such as 'amen', 'please', 'hereby', 'His Majesty', 'Extra Fancy Grade', etc. serve primarily as indicators of illocutionary point or of other constitutive aspects of speech acts. If this is the primary function of these words, then to describe their *meanings* without referring to such functions would be grossly inadequate. Consequently, the appeal to the notion of embedding amounts in fact to a (partial) specification of *meaning* in terms of speech act rules, which are supposed to belong to the domain of use.

Thus, although Searle attributes the three fallacies to a lack of a precise distinction between meaning and use, what we discover is that his way of drawing this distinction is neither as steady nor as tight as he might have wanted it to be. Sometimes it is the distinction between truth conditions and illocutionary forces; sometimes, the distinction between the domain of logical relations and the domain of some 'quasi-logical' relations; sometimes it has to do with what is and what is not 'embedded' in the set of institutional conditions required for the performance of speech acts. But it turns out that none of these pairs is exclusively on the side of use or of meaning. Illocutionary acts have satisfaction conditions, which closely parallel truth conditions. These acts and their components are related via entailments and other logical relations, whose elucidation is the job of illocutionary logic. The meanings of certain expressions are characterized in terms of their role in the performance of certain speech acts, to which they are linked either logically or quasi-

logically. Illocutionary points, the main components of speech acts, can be units of meaning.

This free interplay between meaning and use should come as no surprise since, ultimately, the difference between them is theoretically otiose for Searle. The immediate reason for this is his adoption of the 'Principle of Expressibility', according to which "whatever can be meant can be said" (Searle 1969: 19). This principle establishes in fact a one-to-one correspondence between meanings and uses: "it enables us to equate rules for performing speech acts with rules for uttering certain linguistic elements, since for any possible speech act there is a possible linguistic element *the meaning of which* (given the context of the utterance) is sufficient to determine that its *literal* utterance is a performance of precisely that speech act" (Searle 1969: 20-21; italics mine). In the light of such an equivalence, the study of speech acts amounts to the study of the meanings of the relevant linguistic elements, and vice-versa.

In so far as traditional semantics did not include in its theoretical vocabulary notions such as 'illocutionary point', 'preparatory conditions', etc., it gave only an incomplete semantics of linguistic expressions. What speech act theory does is to enlarge and complete traditional semantics by adding the missing elements. No wonder that it employs the same devices of traditional semantics — necessary and sufficient conditions, analyticity, logically binding rules. It thus *codifies* uses, just as traditional semantics codifies meanings. Furthermore, it purports to be *complete*, in the sense of defining the set of all possible illocutionary acts in terms of a small number of primitives. Such a feat is hailed as a major achievement, for it dispels the "illusion of limitless uses of language" (Searle 1979a: 29) fostered by Wittgenstein and his followers. Instead, speech act theory shows that "there are rather a limited number of basic things we do with language" (ibid.), all the rest being combinations or variations of these basic things.

There are, however, a number of ways in which the theory is incomplete *qua* theory of use, some of them acknowledged by Searle, others not. In the first place, there are many cases where a speaker does not say exactly what he means. But these, Searle contends, "are not theoretically essential to linguistic communication" (Searle 1969: 20). They are not essential because the non-literal, ambiguous, or incomplete utterances can *in principle* be paraphrased by their literal, unambiguous, and complete equivalents, which unequivocally *determine* the speech acts performed through the former. Nevertheless, speech act theory *per se* does not have the apparatus necessary for providing

the relevant paraphrases. In fact, it borrows this apparatus from Grice's theory, as Searle's treatment of indirect speech acts (Searle 1979a: 30-57) and metaphor (ibid.: 76-116) show. It is as if Grice's theory provided merely a sort of 'transformational' component that relates 'surface' utterances to their 'deep structures', the latter being fully and unambiguously described by the semantics of speech acts.

Secondly, the theory is incomplete because literal meanings are not really context-free (see Chapter 25). They depend on an inarticulate Background (Searle 1980) that cannot be made fully explicit. Without this background, even a literal utterance of a sentence is unable to determine unequivocally *precisely* one speech act. But the fact that the background is inarticulate means that it cannot itself be represented semantically. Use involves, then, something irreducible to semantics, even to the all-encompassing semantics of speech acts.

Thirdly, the theory itself is insufficient for determining whether a given utterance is literal or not. The fact that even perfectly complete, unambiguous, and unproblematic sentences can be used indirectly or nonliterally requires the existence of some procedure to determine whether *any* of its uses is literal or not. Since only literal utterances correspond to the specification of precisely one speech act, unless such a procedure is available the reduction of use to meaning cannot be achieved. Again, one may borrow for that purpose the apparatus of Grice's theory. But since it would apply, in this case, not only to 'problematic' utterances, but to all utterances (see Chapter 15a), its application would touch not the 'surface', but the 'base' component of the semantics of speech acts. Taken together with the kind of incompleteness due to the role of the Background, this suggests that the formalism or language of the semantics of speech acts is not self-sufficient, in the sense of not offering completely unambiguous representations of meanings.

III

In his brief remarks on Searle's handling of the A-philosophers' maneuver, Grice raises doubts about the precise status of the non-obviousness condition for assertions or remarks. Referring to a version of Searle's argument prior to *Speech Acts*, Grice observes that "sometimes Searle seems to hold that if the assertibility condition is unfulfilled in the case of a particular utterance, that

utterance fails to *be* an assertion; sometimes he seems to hold that, in such a case, it is an assertion which is *out of order*; and sometimes that it is a *pointless* assertion (or remark)" (Grice 1989: 18). In terms of the later developments of speech act theory, the first alternative corresponds to an *unsuccessful* assertion, and the second (as well as perhaps the third, in one of its possible senses) to a *defective* one. Now, significantly, Grice picks up the third alternative as the one he considers acceptable: "the only tenable version of Searle's thesis (which is of course a version to which he subscribes) is that an utterance or remark to the effect that p will be inappropriate if it is pointless" (Grice 1989: 19). "Indeed" — he continues — "it would be difficult to disagree with this thesis, and much of what I have to say can be looked upon as a development and extension of the idea contained in it" (ibid.).

The question is: Do Searle and Grice subscribe to this thesis *in the same sense*? I think the answer is clearly negative. In *Speech Acts* and later, Searle clearly claims that, in normal contexts, failure to comply with the condition entails defectiveness, i.e., the second, not the third of Grice's alternative readings. And defectiveness is not just a matter of 'inappropriateness', for it has to do with the infringement of one of the constitutive rules of assertion-making. So, Grice's concern — "lest in accepting this thesis, I be thought to be committing myself to more than I would want to commit myself to" (ibid.) — is fully justified. What he does not want to be committed to is the view he rightly suspects Searle to hold, namely that "speech acts of the illocutionary sort [are] conventional acts, the nature of which is to be explained by a specification of the constitutive rules which govern each such act, and on which the possibility of performing the act at all depends" (ibid.). Grice opposes this view, for he doubts that "any *rule* to the effect that a remark should not be made if to make it would be pointless ... would be among the rules the exposition of which would be required to explain the nature of remarking" (Grice 1989: 20; my italics). Instead, he proposes to account for the inappropriateness in question in terms of "other features which remarks characteristically have, together perhaps with some more general principles governing communication or even rational behavior" (ibid.).

These principles are, of course, those of his analysis of conversation. The way they might explain the A-philosophers' data is quite different from Searle's way. Typically, these principles generate *suggestions* rather than strictly deductive conclusions. Consequently, such suggestions have no *analytic* force. In short, they do not belong to the realm of *meaning*. And they do

not belong to this realm because their generation depends essentially on the intervention of principles of communication that are not part of the meaning of any linguistic expression. Furthermore, such principles function as presumptions, i.e., they are defeasible rules of inference. The inferences they license are, thus, cancelable *without* contradiction, unlike what happens with implications or presuppositions. Treated as a presumption, the rule "If *A* asserts that *p*, then *p* is not obvious", applied to *A*'s assertion that *p* (in normal circumstances), does not *entail* that p is in fact not obvious. It only *suggests* that one should proceed on this assumption, unless proven otherwise. Conversely, if such a proof obtains, i.e., if it turns out that p is obvious, this only *suggests* that *A* may not have in fact asserted that *p*, rather than proving that his assertion was defective. Whereas in Searle's scheme the defectiveness of the assertion is the obligatory explanation of the obviousness of the remark (given that, *ex hypothesi*, the situation is normal), on the presumptive reading of this rule, other lines of reasoning are open to the addressee: for example, he can inquire whether the presumption holds *in this particular case* (e.g., whether *A* is indeed engaged in cooperative communication, whether it has been deliberately flouted, whether *A*'s assertion is non-obvious in some other way, etc.).

Though the suggestions generated through reliance on the communicative maxims are not analytic, they are robust and stable enough to ensure communicative success. In this sense, they offer a natural explanation for the intuition of 'quasi-necessary' connections. Paraphrasing Leibniz, we might say that they incline without necessitating. There is no need to explain this binding force by overburdening the analytic apparatus, the well-behaved domain of logic, which Grice is eager to preserve (cf. Grice 1989: 22-24). On the other hand, precisely because they are not analytic, they have the necessary flexibility to account for the unpredictable and less well-behaved — though by no means unsystematic — characteristics of language use.

IV

No doubt Searle's speech act theory and Grice's analysis of conversation can complement each other, because each needs the other. Searle's theory because of the kinds of incompleteness mentioned above. Grice's, because the generation of implicatures relies on an initial tentative identification of the utterance

meaning, most naturally provided by the semantics of speech acts. But the two theories differ in the kind of understanding they have of what is 'use'. Consequently they suggest quite different models for accounting for use. The difference can be highlighted by a number of oppositions, roughly expressed by means of a few keywords:

Searle	*Grice*
Monological	Dialogical
Formal	Informal
Conventional	Non-conventional
Grammatical model	Non-grammatical model
Constitutive rules	Heuristic rules, presumptions
Implication	Implicature
Semantic	Pragmatic (?)
.....	.....

One of the consequences of the adoption by Searle of a particular kind of model is that, for him, phenomena not amenable to treatment in terms of this model are not to be handled as part of a theory of linguistic communication. If such phenomena are at all 'structured', such a structure derives from 'external' principles, alien to the principles of linguistic communication. One such phenomenon is, according to him, conversation (cf. Searle 1992a). I have criticized this position elsewhere (see Chapter 24), and will not repeat my arguments here. Let me only mention one point in that debate, which acquires an emblematic value in the present context. Searle is certainly right in saying that "'conversation' does not name a unit of meaning" (Searle 1992b: 143). If this means that conversation cannot be accounted for in terms of the semantic model, I couldn't agree more. But if this means that 'conversation' does not name a unit of linguistic communication, so that its structure is 'external' to a theory of linguistic communication or use, then Searle's statement simply expresses his own presumption that his is the only possible model for a theory of use.

Speech act theory seeks to treat what it calls use by means of strict rules, which can be formalized into precise illocutionary logic. It seeks to demonstrate that use can be treated as rigorously as meaning has been; that it is no longer the vague notion used by the A-philosophers; that it is not a matter of an indefinite number of vaguely defined language games. But it may have gone too far in its reduction of use to meaning, thereby proving rather than dis-

proving the slogan it originally opposed. The price of this operation is — as usual — the abandonment of those aspects of the phenomena that do not fit the model and the attempted reduction. Those aspects of use that do not readily fit the institutional mold, the rule-based treatment, are either left to be handled by a complementary theory of use *à la* Grice, or else dumped in the ever present Background. To say that conversation or other aspects of use have no 'intrinsic structure' is to say that they don't fit the kind of structure privileged by Searle. But this does not mean that they have no organization whatsoever. It only means that their principles of organization allow for the open-endedness, the vagueness, the defeasibility that, although not easily codifiable, endow the use of language with a measure of creativity well beyond the rule-based creativity permitted by grammar. To Searle's merit it should be said that, in acknowledging the need for a complementation of his theory, he has at least indicated the need and possibility of another kind of pragmatics.

Notes

1. Grice's relevant articles are now collected in Grice (1989).

2. For my analysis of Searle's position I rely mainly on Searle (1969) and the articles collected in Searle (1979a).

3. Cf. Searle (1969: 137, 152). I have called this requirement the 'Principle of the Invariance of Meaning' (Dascal 1983: 28) and have shown that it is widely used in the philosophy of language and in linguistics. An example of Grice's use of this principle can be found in Grice (1989: 17).

4. In an earlier paper criticizing Hare's speech act analysis of 'good', Searle (1962) argued that, though the act of commendation is not performed in every occasion when 'good' is used, it is "in the offing" in every such occasion. This unexplained notion, which is used in that paper to explain the 'noncontingent' character of the connection between 'good' and commending, appears also in *Speech Acts*, in the discussion of another example of the 'speech act fallacy' (Searle 1969:153). In many respects, the later notion of Background (e.g., Searle 1979a: 120ff) incorporates the earlier notion of "in the offing", without doing much to clarify it.

5. Presumably it is also part of what Searle later calls the Background. For, to say that "there are standard or normal situations" (Searle 1969: 144), is not to spell out or articulate what these conditions are in each case.

6. In later versions of speech act theory, another of Grice's Maxims, the Maxim of Quality, is also treated as a preparatory condition: "the speaker has reasons for the truth of the propositional content" (Vanderveken 1985: 186). Vanderveken also stresses that pre-

paratory conditions are strict *presuppositions* of an illocutionary act, a fact allegedly shown by their non-cancelability and by the consequent paradoxical character of trying to perform an illocutionary act while at the same time denying its preparatory condition, as in "You cannot do it but, please, do it!". Sentences such as these are said to be "linguistically odd" and "indeed analytically unsuccessful" (Vanderveken 1990: 115).

7. It should be recalled that Searle (1969: 5ff) as well as Grice (1989: 196-212) oppose Quine's attempt to eliminate the analytic/synthetic distinction.

Chapter 24

The pragmatic structure of conversation

1

The art of answering lies in the ability to restrict the scope of the question. Consider the question "are conversations structured?". What are we to understand by 'conversation' and 'structure' in this question? Some 'conversations' (e.g., a doctor-patient consultation; a round-table debate; a cross-investigation of a witness) are obviously 'structured' (i.e., they have a clear sequencing pattern, a more or less well-defined purpose and topic, and more or less accepted criteria of relevance). Others (e.g., a casual chat; a spontaneous philosophical discussion; a husband-wife quarrel) seem to be, by the same standards, rather 'unstructured'. John Searle, in his article "Conversation", skillfully restricts the scope of the question about the structure of conversation and undertakes to propose and justify an answer to it. It is my purpose here to pay tribute to Searle's endeavor, by taking issue with his way of restricting the question, criticizing his answer, and suggesting an alternative one.

"Traditional speech act theory", says Searle, "is largely confined to single speech acts". Can one extend it beyond its self-imposed limits? Can we, in particular, "get an account of conversations parallel to our account of speech acts?". These are the questions Searle chooses to address. Obviously they are not equivalent to the more general (and more vague) question "are conversations structured?". Searle's negative answer to *his* questions, therefore, does not imply a denial of *any* structure to conversations. It implies only that, for him, the principles according to which conversations are organized, whatever they may be, are neither an "extension" of nor "parallel" to those that organize single speech acts.

Searle does not distinguish between the two versions of his question. But he should. For they lead to different hypotheses about the relationship between speech act theory and the theory of conversation, with significantly diverse *prima facie* plausibilities. Assuming, as one perhaps should, that speech acts *qua* units of linguistic behavior are the *components* of conversa-

tions, the idea of *extension* suggests that any adequate description of the latter's organization must take into account those properties of the former by virtue of which they can be concatenated or otherwise put together. Generally speaking, this corresponds to the plausible idea that a *structured* whole (as opposed to a mere aggregate) is, at least to some extent, bound together by interrelations linking its parts to each other by virtue of their *intrinsic* properties. Thus, just as the chemical valence of its atoms are one of the factors that explain the structure of a molecule, so too one should plausibly expect the intrinsic properties of speech acts (e.g., their illocutionary points, conditions of satisfaction, etc.) to be one of the factors determining the structure of conversations, in so far as the latter are not randomly assembled sets of speech acts. But it is rather *im*plausible to expect also that there is some sort of *parallelism* between the structure of single speech acts and conversations. For, in general, we do not expect, as did Leibniz, for one, that the whole be structurally analogous to its parts.[1] No doubt it would be nice if it were so, for it would allow for an enormous parsimony in explanatory principles. But we know that molecules are not structured in the same way as atoms, cells are not structured like molecules, words are not structured like phonemes, sentences are not structured like words, and so on. In each of these cases the structured whole displays both characteristic properties and organizational principles, which are not present in their components. This is what one should expect in the case of conversations as well.

Though he examines various forms of the extension hypothesis (by focusing on the *sequential* relations of speech acts in a conversation), the real target of Searle's criticism is not the idea of extension, but that of structural parallelism. This will become apparent as we proceed. Yet, given the *prima facie* implausibility of such an idea, why bother to criticize it at all? I think Searle's intuition in undertaking this task is basically sound: certain acclaimed forms of theorizing about conversation, in terms of 'constraints', 'rules' and 'logic', seem to imply such a parallelism; any such implication must be shown to be wrong — indeed, nearly absurd — in order to clear the way for an account of conversations that does not misrepresent the nature of their 'structure'. Among other things, such an account should persuade us that, though conversations are not structured by principles similar to those that govern speech acts, it still makes sense to conceive of them as *composed of* speech acts, thus vindicating the value of the latter as actual units of linguistic behavior. Unfortunately, by paying too little attention to the idea of extension and focusing on

parallelism, which he rightly rejects, Searle fails to produce such a vindication. And by assuming that granting *any* 'internal' structure to conversations would imply accepting some form of the proscribed parallelism, he leaves us with no account whatsoever of the structure of conversation. The baby thus slips away with the bath water. But, as usual, it is highly instructive to see how this happens, because it might help us to save the baby.

II

Three kinds of theories of conversation are criticized by Searle, though only two are referred to their actual proponents. The first consists in viewing conversation as a Wittgensteinian language game, where the moves are speech acts. Each move constrains the set of possible and appropriate ensuing moves. A question requires an answer, an offer requires an acceptance or a rejection, etc.[2] Sometimes, Searle observes, such constraints seem to be quite specific, going beyond the specification of the appropriate kind of illocutionary point of the countermove. For example, yes/no and wh-questions seem to establish also the semantic and syntactic structure of appropriate answers, and bets are not even "fully made" unless followed by the hearer's acceptance. Cases such as the latter show not only that the conversational sequence is constrained by its component speech acts, but also that sometimes only the sequence ensures the "completion" of a single speech act.[3] Yet, according to Searle, such cases of "internally related" sequences of speech acts are rather exceptional, and consequently the Wittgeinsteinian approach yields little prospect as a way of extending the analysis beyond the single speech act. Searle's prime counterexample is the ubiquitous speech act of assertion, which, *per se*, seems neither to constrain nor to be constrained by surrounding speech acts.

The discussion of assertion brings us to the second kind of theoretical account rejected by Searle, namely Grice's "logic of conversation". He concentrates his attention on the maxim of relevance, which he considers to be the Gricean maxim "most promising for explaining the structure of conversations". Searle first claims that "it is not a constitutive rule of statement-making that a statement should be relevant to the surrounding discourse". In this, relevance contrasts with the 'essential conditions' for assertion (e.g., commitment to truthfulness). If a speech act satisfies these conditions, it qualifies as a successful and nondefective assertion, regardless of whether it is relevant or

not to the preceding and following bits of discourse. In this sense, relevance, in so far as it is required, is viewed by Searle as an 'external' constraint on assertion (and other speech acts as well): violations of this constraint (e.g., when one abruptly changes the subject of the conversation; see Chapter 10) do not *per se* disqualify a statement as "perfectly satisfactory", though they may be perceived as rude or otherwise "inappropriate".

But couldn't relevance, though not constitutive of assertions and other single speech acts, be constitutive of conversations? Searle rejects this possibility on the grounds that the relevance of a conversational sequence is not "determined by the fact that it is a conversation". Hence, "you can't explain the general structure of conversation in terms of relevance", for "the fact that a sequence of utterances is a conversation, by itself, places no constraints whatever on what would count as a relevant continuation of the sequence" (Searle 1992a: 14).

In order to explain the undisputed fact that we do judge conversational sequences in terms of relevance, Searle calls attention to the "deep syntax" of *relevant*. A speech act in a conversation, he says, is relevant not to a topic, an issue or a question, but to a purpose of (one of) the participants. Conversations as such have no general purpose; hence what constrains relevance in any given conversation is something "outside the fact that it is a conversation, namely the purposes of the participants". Since any number of different purposes can animate the participants at any point in a conversation, it is not surprising to observe a similar variability in the judgments of relevance based on them. Thus, a given remark may be interpreted as a deliberate change of topic initiating *another* conversation, or as conveying an implicature *within* the same conversation, or as a digression, or simply as a casual lapse in irrelevance, depending on the purpose (and other mental states) one assigns to its utterer. It think it is this extreme context-dependence of relevance judgments that, ultimately, makes Searle believe that relevance is "external" to conversation and not sufficiently tight anyway to function as a "structural" principle — both good reasons for him to conclude that it cannot be *constitutive* of conversational structure.

The third approach rejected by Searle is the ethnomethodologists' account of turn-taking in conversations. His objection is that the so-called turn-taking "rules" are not rules at all, but at best descriptions of regularities that can be observed in conversations. They are not rules because they are not the kind of thing people *follow*. That is to say, people's behavior is not even partly caused

by the *intention* to conform to the rule; it just *happens* to display the kind of regularity described by the alleged rule. In this, the turn-taking "rules" differ radically from speech act rules. Therefore, even if the former provide correct descriptions of some aspects of conversations, they cannot form the basis for an account of conversational structure that is either an extension of or parallel to speech act theory.[4]

Through his critique of the 'wrong' approaches, we are now in a position to appreciate what kind of account Searle is in fact condemning, as well as what would count for him as an acceptable account. The Wittgensteinians are wrong because their notion of a speech act as defining a "space of possible countermoves" is not generalizable (see Chapter 23). The Griceans are wrong because the constraints they work with — notably relevance — are not "intrinsic" to conversations as such but come from "the outside". The ethnomethodologists are wrong because what they propose are not "rules". An account of the structure of conversation, in order to be really analogous to the account of speech acts, would have to overcome all of these shortcomings. It should explain conversational structure on the basis of *general*, strictly *intrinsic*, and real *rules*. Such rules would be *constitutive* in that they would *define* the notion 'conversation' in general, and provide the basis for a taxonomy of types of conversation. Conformity to the rules would then be the criterion for a 'successful', 'non-defective', or, more generally, 'well-formed' conversation.

Though Searle's ostensive model for such an (impossible) account of conversation is speech act theory, it might as well have been syntactic or semantic theory. For example, Searle's claim that a relevant continuation is not constrained by what precedes it in a sequence of utterances can be contrasted with the fact that, if an expression in a sentence is a transitive verb, this *does place* very definite constraints on the expressions that may follow it in the sentence. These constraints, of course, are those formulated in the *rules of grammar*. What Searle is telling us, therefore, is that there are no *rules of conversational relevance* analogous to rules of grammar. Thus, Searle's argument, if correct, amounts to a *reductio ad absurdum* of the idea that there might be such a thing as a "grammar" of conversation.

III

I have no qualms with such a *reductio*. As a matter of fact, when the first proposals to develop a "text- grammar" were made, I criticized them on the grounds that the notion of "(sentence)-grammar" is not an appropriate model to follow in attempting to explain the structure of texts (cf. Dascal and Margalit 1974). Furthermore, the arguments used in that criticism were very similar to Searle's, namely: (a) sequential 'grammatical' constraints on texts (e.g., anaphoric co-reference) are very restricted in scope, and (b) the 'coherence' (or any other measure of the 'well-formedness') of a text is not an intrinsic property of the text, but a function of the context as well (see also Chapter 10). I think that criticism remains valid today: in fact, much of the work that still bears (inertially) the name "text-grammar" has significantly departed from the originally intended analogy, and became, more palatably to me, "pragmatic" in spirit.[5]

Though I agree with the rejection of the grammatical model (and, for similar reasons, of the speech act model) as inadequate for the analysis of conversational structure, I disagree with some of the arguments Searle employs to support such a rejection, as well as with the implications, both implicit and explicit, that he draws from it. In a nutshell, the disagreement lies in our divergent views on *why* the grammatical and speech act models fail. For Searle, the main reason is that, unlike speech acts, "conversations as such lack a particular purpose or point". This may well be true, as far as it goes. But, to my mind, there is a deeper reason, namely: the structure of conversations is essentially *pragmatic*, whereas the grammatical and speech act analogies suggest that it is (or should be) *syntactic* and/or *semantic*.

Let me elaborate. Conversations — and other forms of discourse — are prime examples of the *use* of language. As such, they fall naturally within the domain of pragmatics, broadly conceived as a theory of the use of language. Now, such a theory is a theory of what people *do* with the structures that are available to them in their language. Though it must, of course, take into account linguistic structures of all sorts, it is *not* a theory of those structures, but of how they are put to use. And they are typically put to use, in communication, to convey *speakers' meanings*. A pragmatic theory of the use of language in communication is, therefore, essentially a theory of how people use linguistic structures in order to convey and understand speakers' meanings. Syntax, semantics, *and* speech act theory all describe different and comple-

mentary aspects of linguistic structure — all of which are instrumental in letting speakers convey speakers' meanings and hearers understand them.

Consider, for example, the point of view of the hearer. On the whole, one can say that the combined result of syntax, semantics, and speech act theory is to yield, for any given utterance with which the hearer is confronted, first (one or more) *sentence meaning(s)*, and then, with the help of contextual information that fills in the 'gaps' in sentence meaning(s) and disambiguates them, (one or more) *utterance meaning(s)*. Such "meanings" include the specification of illocutionary force, on the strength of Searle's insistence that only the formula 'F(p)' (illocutionary force + propositional content) fully represents the meaning of an utterance (see Searle 1975a). They also include those items of contextual information required by the eventual presence of deictics and other context-oriented expressions in the sentence uttered. But, contrary to current beliefs, neither of these facts (assignment of illocutionary force and incorporation of contextual information) ensures that the process of interpretation comes to a halt with utterance meaning. For, as we all know, it is always possible that the *speaker's meaning*, i.e., what is intended to be conveyed by the utterance, differs from the utterance meaning. The latter is only an initially plausible *hypothesis*, based on the application of the rules of language, about what the former might be. To determine whether the speaker's meaning is in fact nothing but the utterance meaning or something else is precisely the business of *pragmatic interpretation*. And the task of a pragmatic theory is to account for the means whereby this is achieved. Some, but not all, of these means are certainly the Gricean maxims, notably the maxim of relevance.

Armed with this all too brief sketch of what I take pragmatics to be about,[6] we can now proceed to discuss the details of my disagreement with Searle, with a view to possible ways of overcoming it. I will first consider speech act theory and then conversation, in order to see how they compare with respect to Searle's external/internal dichotomy, the role of relevance, and the kind of rules that apply to them.

Speech act theory, in so far as it analyzes and classifies illocutionary forces, and considers how they are in principle attached to certain linguistic expressions, is *not* a pragmatic theory, in the sense described above. This simply means that, *per se*, speech act theory does not yield *speakers' meanings*.[7] In order to do so, it needs complementation. Searle acknowledges this fact at least with respect to one class of acts, which require relevance and other Gricean maxims to be correctly interpreted, namely, indirect speech acts

(Searle 1975b). He distinguishes between the 'primary illocutionary act' (the one ultimately intended) and the 'secondary illocutionary act' (the one whose performance only serves the purpose of conveying the former). The latter is also called 'literal', while the former is 'nonliteral' or simply 'indirect'. It would seem natural to describe the latter as the actual *speaker's meaning* and the former as the *utterance meaning* which, though *playing a role* in conveying the speaker's meaning, is not part thereof. The terminology 'literal' vs. 'nonliteral' is suggestive in this respect. In Searle's account of metaphor, the 'metaphorical' or nonliteral meaning is ascribed to the level of speaker's meaning, while the literal meaning (whether 'defective' or not) of the metaphorical utterance is "not really meant", but serves just as a means to somehow convey the metaphorical meaning (Searle 1979c). This terminology also suggests that the 'secondary illocutionary act' is assigned on the basis of purely semantic considerations, which govern literal meanings in general. These considerations need to be supplemented by pragmatic ones in order to determine the primary illocutionary act, i.e., the actual speaker's meaning. But Searle is committed to the view that there is a radical difference between metaphor and indirect speech acts, for he believes that *both* the literal and nonliteral acts are performed whenever one performs an indirect speech act. Thus, if I say, in a crowded bus, "Madam, you are stepping on my foot", intending it as a request for the lady to alleviate my pain, I am, according to Searle, making *both* a literal assertion *and* a nonliteral request. This is surely a strange doctrine. For, why should one say that an assertion was *actually made* if it does not correspond to the speaker's *actual* point in uttering his utterance? To be sure, from a narrow semantic/speech-act-theory point of view, one can identify it as an assertion (if it fulfills the essential conditions). And this fact surely plays a role in its actual interpretation as a request. But communicatively it is this actual interpretation that matters. Searle's problem is that he views speech act theory as "pragmatic" when it isn't really, for it doesn't reach, *per se*, the level of speaker's meaning. A speech act is made only when it corresponds to the speaker's meaning, not when it fulfills some formal conditions. You may *go through the motions of statement-making* but you only make a statement if this is the *actual* point of your going through those motions. And there is no way to determine what the actual point is except by pragmatic means.

It is essential to realize that the need for 'pragmatic complementation' does not arise only in cases of indirectness. Even when the actual speaker's point coincides with the 'literal' point of the utterance, the determination of

this fact involves the use of the same pragmatic principles that are operative when they do not coincide. In this sense, the speaker's point (which is a part of the speaker's meaning) lies *always* beyond the scope of speech act theory *per se*. In so far as it is the speaker's point that represents her actual purpose in performing the speech act, such a purpose is, in Searle's terminology, always 'external' vis-à-vis the point 'internally' ascribed to her utterance by speech act theory. Yet, in so far as communicatively what really matters is the *actual* point, what is external from the narrow semantic/speech-act-theory point of view turns out to be in fact the "internal" core of the communicative process. Similarly, the means whereby speaker's meaning is determined will be considered 'external' if looked at from a semantic point of view, while they will become 'internal' if looked at from a pragmatic point of view. Thus, relevance considerations may indeed be assumed to be 'external' to the question whether a given utterance fulfills the conditions for qualifying as an assertion.[8] But they are 'internal' to the question whether such an utterance *in fact* conveys, in the context of its use, an assertion. In this connection, my early distinction (see Chapter 2) between "semantic relevance" and "pragmatic relevance" should be better understood as meaning that, in interpreting an utterance, you first try as its speaker's meaning the straightforward semantic interpretation of the utterance. If it fails to comply with the requirement of relevance (among others), you then proceed to look for alternative interpretations. That first try is 'semantic' only in the sense that it hypothesizes as the speaker's meaning the semantic interpretation. But this hypothesis is already a pragmatic one, in that it is a hypothesis about the speaker's meaning, and consequently testing for its relevance is from the outset "pragmatic".

We can now apply the preceding remarks to conversation. Let me grant, for the sake of the argument, that Searle is correct in claiming that, unlike speech acts, conversations as such have no intrinsic point. In the light of what was said above, to call attention to this fact is simply to say that conversations differ from speech acts in that there is no set of *semantic* or, more generally, *formal* conditions that specify their "point" or some equivalent, broader notion. As I read it, what this claim amounts to is that, whereas if I am confronted with an utterance of a certain form I can make an initial, educated guess about its illocutionary force based exclusively on my semantic knowledge (which includes speech act theory), no corresponding guess can be made regarding sets of utterances, because no corresponding semantic knowledge exists. Consequently, whatever hypotheses are made concerning the "point"

of a conversation, including the very determination of whether it is at all a conversation, are in a sense *immediately pragmatic*. For they stem directly from the level of actual speakers' meanings, without going through the intermediary conversational equivalents of sentence and utterance meaning. In this sense, conversations as such appear to be 'pure' pragmatic phenomena. They make use, of course, of linguistic structures of all sorts, but *as such* they do not have, themselves, a 'linguistic' structure.

If this is correct, then it comes as no surprise that whatever significant structure conversations have should be found primarily at the pragmatic, rather than at the syntactic or semantic/speech-act-theory levels. Obviously, from the latter point of view, such structure will appear to be 'external'. But from a pragmatic point of view — which is the one that really matters if conversations are indeed purely or mainly pragmatic phenomena — it will surely qualify as 'inner structure'. Apart from the terminological quibble, what this implies is that the principles that account for conversational organization are pragmatic principles, and the level of organization is essentially that of speakers' meanings. Let us spell out these implications.

One important factor in terms of which conversation is structured is what I have proposed to call 'conversational demand' (see Chapter 2). Utterances in a conversation are typically reactive.[9] What each utterance reacts to is what its speaker perceives as the 'demand' placed upon her at that stage of the conversation. Normally, it is the immediately preceding utterance that has most weight in determining the conversational demand to which the next utterance should react. Accordingly, we tend to judge the 'appropriateness' of a given contribution to a conversation in terms of how well it matches the preceding utterance. For example, were the lady to whom I addressed my indirect request to remove her weight from over my foot to reply (without moving), "Yes, indeed", her response would be normally perceived as grossly inappropriate. This brief exchange is hardly a 'conversation', but it clearly shows that we normally expect utterances in a conversation to concatenate or match not at the level of utterance meaning (or 'literal illocutionary act', in Searle's terms), but at that of speakers' meaning, i.e., pragmatically. The expectation of a fit, at this level, is so strong that one often interprets a misfit as being merely apparent, and reinterprets either the conversational demand or the speaker's meaning of the response so as to restore the fit. In this way, some of the so-called implicatures are generated. For instance, one may reinterpret the woman's response — in the example above — as conveying the speaker's

meaning "I don't care" or "I am doing it on purpose". Such reinterpretations, however, require support from additional contextual information (e.g., my knowledge that the woman hates me). They thus bring into the account of the concatenation, in a natural and organic way, those other 'purposes' of the speakers that Searle considers 'external'. This shows, once more, that the pragmatic concatenation of adjacent utterances in a conversation goes well beyond a simple fit between their illocutionary points (and propositional contents). Just as an initial misfit can be overruled by further contextual information, so too an initial fit can be eventually replaced by a 'deeper' fit in the light of additional evidence. Participating in a conversation requires being constantly in the lookout for reasons that might justify less obvious interpretative alternatives. But this only means that one must make constant use of the full set of pragmatic interpretation tools. One such tool is, as indicated, the expectation that each utterance meet the conversational demand to which it reacts. But, strong as it is, such an expectation is only a *presumption*, i.e., it is *defeasible*. Consequently, though it is certainly one of the principles in terms of which conversation is organized, both its openness to contextual reinterpretation and its defeasibility imply that the structure it imposes on conversations cannot be described in terms of conditions of 'well-formedness'.

The conversational demand is, of course, related to the illocutionary (speaker's) point of the utterance that establishes it. But it is not *determined* by it, for it is, usually, much more specific. This is why the notion of conversational demand is much more suitable to account for fine-grained conversational concatenation than the notion of a set of "possible countermoves" attached (in the conversation-as-a-game paradigm) to certain types of illocutionary point. The need for a fairly specific identification of the conversational demand for the conversation to proceed is illustrated by the pervasiveness of requests for clarification such as "What do you want me to say?", "Why did you say that?", "You certainly don't want to know that, do you?", "Why do you ask?", as well as by comments such as "I know exactly what you would like me to say". Consider the following conversation between two students, which I overheard:

> Eli: How is it going, Ilana?
> Ilana: Tell me what you want to know, and I'll tell you.
> Eli: Have you come this morning?
> Ilana: Whether I have come this morning? ... Don't worry, the lecture was bullshit.

Clearly, in her first reply, Ilana seeks a more precise definition of Eli's conversational demand. She wants him "to get to the point". In her second reply, she pauses to infer what demand lies behind Eli's question, and replies accordingly.

In both cases, she does not see in the ostensive illocutionary points and propositional contents of Eli's utterances (which might well be Eli's actual speaker's meanings, at this initial stage of the conversation), respectively 'phatic opening' of a casual chat and 'request of information about Ilana's matinal presence somewhere', the actual conversational demand. Consequently, her reactions do not enact any of the 'possible countermoves' corresponding to those ostensive points. Nevertheless, they are pragmatically understandable (both to her interlocutor and to an observer) because they concatenate with what she perceives to be the actual conversational demand to which she is supposed to respond.

Basically, it is by reference to the conversational demand that relevance comes to play a role in structuring conversation. Searle is right in claiming that the 'deep syntax' of *relevant* is "relevant to a purpose". He may also be right in pointing out that conversations as such have no purpose, so that 'relevant to the conversation' is a vacuous expression. But at each stage of a conversation there is a more or less well defined conversational demand to which the ensuing utterance is expected to relate. The expression 'relevant to the conversational demand' is, therefore, perfectly meaningful and quite definite at any given point of a conversation. It may thus serve to characterize a *general* pragmatic constraint on the sequential organization of conversations. Much of what was said above about the expectation of appropriateness applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to relevance. As a *presumption*, it is defeasible, so that its violation does not entail 'ill-formedness'. Nevertheless, it is a strong presumption, to wit the fact that even digressions must somehow comply with it, albeit 'marginally' (see Chapter 10). To wit also the fact that it is on the basis of such a presumption that indirect speech acts and other forms of indirectness are understood.

Searle points out that there is an uncomfortable 'circularity' in the relationship between relevance and purpose, which would seem to disqualify relevance as a significant constraint on conversations:

> ...the problem is that there is no general purpose of conversations, qua conversations, so what will count as relevant will always have to be specified relative to a purpose of the participants, which may or may not be the purpose of the

> conversation up to that point. If we insist that it be relevant to the antecedently existing purpose of the conversation, then the account will be circular because the criteria of relevance are not independent of the criteria of identity of the particular conversation; and if we don't require relevance to the conversational purpose, then anything goes provided it is relevant to some purpose or other. That would put no constraints on the structure of actual talk exchanges (Searle 1992a: 14).

If I understand it well, part of the difficulty pointed out by Searle is due to the fact that he places himself in the position of an observer of a conversation (later on he speaks of "looking at the conversation"), who has to decide whether a given contribution at a given point is relevant or not, exclusively on the basis of what he observes. In order to decide, he must be able to know to what purpose that contribution is supposed to be relevant. But conversations don't have purposes that you can discover just by "looking at them". So, the purpose must be that of one (or both) of the participants. Yet, in order to decide what that purpose is, all you have to go by is the participants' contribution to the conversation, and you can only assign a purpose to a participant by assessing the relevance of her particular contribution(s). If you were allowed to draw on additional information (e.g., if you knew more, from independent sources, about the participants' motivation, background, etc.), you might be able to break the circle, at least tentatively. And if you were yourself a participant, you would at least know *your* purposes. But the problem would in fact persist, even under these improved conditions. For, even then, you can never know for sure whether a given 'bizarre' response of your interlocutor is due to a misunderstanding of the conversational demand, or to a deliberate purpose not to relate to it, or to mere casual irrelevance, or else is ultimately relevant under some criterion you didn't think of (see Chapter 14).

The circularity in question, however, is not peculiar to the case at hand. It is in fact an instance of the general indeterminacy arising from situations in which, given a piece of behavior (with or without additional evidence), you have to determine the values of two or more intentional variables underlying that behavior. We are familiar with the fact, pointed out by Davidson (1975), that assignment of meaning depends on the assignment of belief, and vice-versa (see Chapters 9 and 15). Interpretive problems such as these are *practically* solved by strategies that involve the use of presumptions. In this sense, the presumption of relevance is on a par with other principles of interpretation such as the principles of charity (Davidson) and rationalization (Lewis). The fact that all of them are only presumptions is what ensures that it is

possible on occasion to go against them. If, for instance, on independent grounds we have good reasons to assume that an interlocutor is not relating to the conversational demand (which she does not even bother to identify, since, say, she is clearly paying attention to some event outside the conversation), then there is no point in trying to reinterpret her remark as hiddenly relevant (i.e., as conveying an implicature). Still, it is the availability of the presumptive strategies, which form part of the accepted communicative practice, that allows one to break the circle by forming initially plausible interpretative hypotheses.

To insist that the principle in terms of which much of our communicative activity is possible organizes that activity 'externally' is like to insist that the presumption of innocence or the principle of reliance on precedents organize legal practice 'externally' or 'non-constitutively' wherever they are, though traditionally followed, not explicitly formulated in some law.[10] It is characteristic of human practices that, even when they are regulated by explicit conventions or rules, the *use* of such rules is in turn guided by the participants' reliance upon non-explicit principles, which constitute the 'tradition' within which the practice is possible. But it is a mistake to assume that, because they are non-explicit and non-formal, such principles are less important in accounting for the 'structure' of the practice than the formal rules. In some cases — and conversation may be one of them — they are even *more* important.

IV

Let me turn now to the positive things Searle has to say about "what holds conversations together", namely shared intentionality and the role of the background. I accept nearly everything Searle says about the importance of these two factors in structuring conversations. But I disagree with his interpretation of their role as 'external' and as supporting the difference he tries to establish between the modes of structuration of speech acts and conversations. In fact, on closer inspection it will become apparent that the roles of shared intentionality and the background support rather what I have said so far about the pragmatic character of the structure of conversations, and about the need for a similar pragmatic account of speech acts.

Let us begin with shared intentionality. Unfortunately, Searle's remarks on this topic are very brief. But they convey an important insight that can be

further developed. The insight is that conversations are, typically, *genuine* forms of *collective* action. What this means is that underlying each individual contribution to a conversation there is not only an individual I-intention, but also a collective, we-intention. Thus, intentionality is 'shared' in conversation not by the fact that the participants all have the same I-intention or purpose, but by the fact that the intentional content of their I-intentions, even though they may differ, all refer to some (common) we-intention. In this, conversation, *qua* collective *action*, differs from a sum of individual actions having the same I-intentional content, as when a group of hikers, upon the beginning of a thunderstorm, all run to take cover under the same roof. Compare this to a platoon storming a hill, where, though each soldier has a different I-intention and performs a different action, all share the we-intention of jointly storming the hill (see Chapter 5).

Within this general characterization of the shared intentionality of conversation, several gradations can be found. At the barest minimum, the we-intention shared by participants in a conversation is that of just cooperating-in-the-conversation, say, with the sole phatic purpose of 'communicating', as in how-are-things-going? or the-weather-is-nice kinds of conversations. Even this minimum, however, is sufficient to require that underlying each contribution there be an I-intention conforming to the we-intention, e.g., by identifying, addressing, and eventually matching the 'conversational demand' at each stage. Other talk-exchanges may have much more specific we-intentions, e.g., jointly solving a problem, taking decisions, etc. One can also distinguish between 'overt' we-intentions, i.e., those actually shared by all participants, and 'covert' ones, in which the intentions of some 'dominant' participants determine the course of the conversation, without the others being aware thereof. This in turn can be made in a deliberately 'manipulative' way (e.g., when a teacher induces students to discuss a topic without telling them that their performance is going to be used, say, as a leadership selection test) or not.

What emerges from the elaboration of an account of the various forms of shared intentionality in general is in fact a fairly definite *typology* of forms of collective action.[11] Based on it, a corresponding typology for kinds of conversations, along the lines suggested above, might be developed. If so, then invoking shared intentionality as a characteristic feature of conversations shows exactly the opposite of what Searle claims in the opening remarks of part III of his essay. For, instead of a disanalogy, a striking analogy emerges

between speech acts and conversations in this respect. Speech acts are generally characterized by their illocutionary point, which is an I-intention. Their taxonomy is based on the different forms such an I-intention can take, through the variation of a certain number of fixed parameters (cf. Vanderveken 1985). Conversations appear to be generally characterized by having a 'cooperative purpose', which takes the form of a shared we-intention of its participants. A taxonomy for them can be developed by considering the varieties of we-intentions and their interrelations with the participants' I-intentions. How this taxonomy will ultimately look like, and whether it will be based upon a set of fixed parameters, depends on the further development of the theory of collective behavior and its application to conversation. But this does not detract from the initial plausibility of the analogy.

Such a rapprochement between speech acts and conversations, however, seems to call for a revision of an assumption made earlier in this chapter. The reader will recall that I have accepted, "for the sake of the argument", Searle's claim that conversations as such have no point or purpose. I interpreted this as meaning that conversations are 'purely pragmatic' phenomena. It now appears that, like speech acts, they have also some 'semantic' structure.

For, shared we-intentions, just like I-intentions, have 'conditions of satisfaction'. Therefore, they impose 'formal' constraints on conversations. Yet, by insisting that the structure of conversations is primarily pragmatic, what I am stressing is the fact that these are constraints on the *pragmatic interpretations* of the speech acts that constitute the conversation. Thus, the cooperative we-intention of a participant in a conversation is only satisfied if it properly addresses the conversational demand established by the *speaker's meaning* of her interlocutor's utterance, rather than addressing merely its 'literal illocutionary point'. The discovery that these constraints are 'formal' does not obliterate the fact that they apply to pragmatic objects. On the other hand, it supports the claim that the structure they impose on conversations is as 'internal' as anything can be.

Let us turn now to the role of the background. According to Searle, the background consists of essentially inarticulate, and therefore non-representational, 'knowledge' that underlies all forms of representing (Searle 1983: 143ff.). In so far as conversations involve the use of representations (e.g., linguistic representations), the role of the background cannot be ignored in an account of conversational organization. Furthermore, as Searle's sample analysis of a TV conversation demonstrates, the role of the background cannot be

eliminated by the addition of explicit information to the body of the conversation. No matter how explicit a conversation is, it still relies, for its proper functioning, on an implicit background.

All this is unobjectionable. What puzzles me, however, is why Searle singles out the role of the background in the context of a discussion of the structure of conversations. After all, as Searle himself emphasizes, the background plays an indispensable role in *all* forms of representation, single speech acts included. Its role in conversations, therefore, is not *differential*. Furthermore, in the light of his previous insistence that whatever structure conversations have is 'external', singling out the background as one of the factors that structure conversations implies that such a factor is 'external'. But then, since no form of representation is self-sufficient, but rather is 'enabled' only by reference to the background, one must conclude that all forms of representation are in fact 'externally' structured. In particular, speech acts, whose defining intentional contents also become definite only by reference to the background, can no longer be said to be 'internally' structured. In this way, the alleged difference between the 'internal' structure of speech acts and the 'external' structure of conversations vanishes, *precisely* by invoking the role of the background.

It seems to me that my previous discussion provides a straightforward solution for this puzzle. The intervention of the background is indeed essential for the *use* of any form of representation. In fact, the background is just one of the sources of 'contextual information' in terms of which the process of *pragmatic* interpretation is conducted.[12] The essential implicitness or non-representational character that Searle assigns to it makes it especially fit to comprise the principles and assumptions that constitute the 'tradition' within which the practice of using specific types of representations is possible; for such principles are, as I have argued, a matter of 'knowing how', not of 'knowing that' (see Chapter 17).

If the role of the background is, thus, essentially pragmatic, it makes sense to say that it is 'external' only if one assumes that representations have also a background-independent, 'semantic' characterization, which would deserve the name of 'internal'. I believe one must make such an assumption, for otherwise one would slip into the untenable position I have dubbed 'radical contextualism' (see Chapter 25). And I believe that Searle, by insisting on the 'inner' structure of speech acts as contrasted with the 'external', background-determined structure of conversations, is in fact withdrawing from his earlier

(Searle 1978) commitment to this form of contextualism, and acknowledging the need for a semantic account of speech acts (and, perhaps, of other forms of representation as well). The reason for stressing the *essential* role of background in conversations is now apparent: their structure depends, as was shown above, on the *pragmatic*, i.e., background-dependent, aspects of speech acts, not on their semantic aspects alone.

It seems to me that the preceding argument might be extended to the rest of Searle's theory of intentionality. For, the main thrust of that theory is the attempt to characterize very specific conditions of identity of mental states. In this sense, it seeks a 'semantic' theory of such states. The intervention of the background should be seen not as affecting these identity conditions, but rather the *use* of those states in cognitive processes, i.e., it would belong to a 'pragmatic' theory of such processes. If this application of the pragmatic/semantic distinction to our mental life is possible, and if one further assumes that language is (part of) the background of our cognitive processes, then that part of the pragmatics of mental life that deals with the role of language in it would certainly be the lion's share of what I have called 'psychopragmatics' (Dascal 1983: 45ff.; see also Chapters 16 and 18).

v

In all good novels, the opening sentence is a tell-tale indication of what is to follow. So too in Searle's (1992a) essay. "Traditionally" — the essay begins — "speech act theory has a very restricted subject matter". It is indeed this restricted character of traditional speech act theory that leads Searle to conclude that there is no significant 'parallelism' between the structures of speech acts and conversations, and that there is no way in which the theory of the former can be 'extended' in order to form the core of the theory of the latter. However, as soon as one recognizes the need to complement traditional speech act theory with a genuinely pragmatic counterpart, not only does such an extension become possible, but even some interesting parallelisms emerge. The restricted speech act theory belongs to *langue* — as Searle (1969: 17) rightly insists — because it affords a *semantic* theory about aspects hitherto neglected of the meaning of utterances. Its principles do not resemble those of conversation because the latter are essentially *pragmatic* principles governing the *use* of language. Yet, as soon as speech acts are considered not *in abstracto*

but as concrete pieces of linguistic behavior, they become, just as any other "part of language", subjected to the pragmatic constraints of use. In this sense, any account of the structure of linguistic elements must be liable to be *integrated* (a better word than 'extended') into an account of the use of language. In this way, principles of "use", such as the notion of relevance, become necessary for interpreting any structural element of language: grammatical, phonemic, referential, *and* illocutionary force ambiguity are all disambiguated in the context of use by appeal, among other things, to the notion of relevance. Pragmatics is everywhere, not only in conversation, though conversation is perhaps unique in that its structure depends directly on the pragmatic interpretation of its constituent speech acts.

Conversations — just as other forms of discourse — are prime examples of the *use* of language. Single speech acts considered *in abstracto* — just as isolated sentences — are structural units of *language*. The former are organized by genuinely pragmatic principles, while the latter are organized by grammatical/semantical principles. This is why the latter have 'constitutive' rules, while the former haven't. In a strict sense, the latter are liable to 'structural' explanations, while the former require 'functional' ones. This does not mean, however, that, in a laxer sense, conversations (and other forms of discourse) do not have 'structure'. Just as functionalism is the mistake that consists in trying to explain everything in language functionally, constitutivism is the opposite mistake, namely that of trying to deny 'structure' or 'organization' to what cannot be explained by restricted 'structural' principles. Both are inverted forms of reductionism. Searle's critique of constitutivism in the analysis of conversations is a step in the right direction, and is consonant with his anti-reductionist stance in matters of intentionality. But it should be complemented by a clear acknowledgment of both, the limitations of constitutivism per se and the possibilities of a genuine pragmatic account of the 'structure' of conversations.

Searle and Davidson (1985) are right in claiming that the principles that regulate conversations (and communication in general) are not "conventions" (Davidson) or "constitutive rules" (Searle). But they are wrong if they take this to imply that conversations have no organizing principles, or that such principles do no grant them an 'inner' structure. Davidson is also right in contending that even the use of single speech acts — in fact, the use of language in general — is not accountable for in terms of conventions or constitutive rules. Though one must agree with Searle that speech acts *qua* units of language are

also structured by such constitutive rules, he should be prepared to admit that, *qua* units of language use, they are further structured — in a no less 'inner' way — by pragmatic principles.

Notes

1. This idea is one of the ruling principles of Leibniz's rationalism, and it is illustrated everywhere in his system. For instance: "...the *optimum* is found not only in the whole but also in each part..."; "the smallest parts of the universe are ruled in accordance with the order of greatest perfection; otherwise the whole would not be so ruled" (*Tentamen Anagogicum* 1696; in Leibniz 1969: 478); "In this respect compound beings are in symbolic agreement with the simple" (*Monadology* 1714: 61; in Leibniz 1969: 649).

2. For a theory of this kind, see Holdcroft (1978). For a treatment of relevance in this spirit, see Holdcroft (1987).

3. This fact, by the way, casts doubt on the choice of speech acts as *independent* units of analysis.

4. I think ethnomethodologists would not disagree with Searle in this respect. As far as I can recall, both in the Urbino (1979) and Campinas (1981) conferences, Schegloff argued that speech act theory is *irrelevant* to the analysis of conversations, and should be *replaced* by another kind of analysis (e.g., the turn-taking one), which neither emulates nor extends nor even employs the concepts of speech act theory. If Searle indeed succeeds in proving, as he purports to do in the present article, that conversations are not structured neither in terms of nor analogously to speech acts, he is in fact providing support for Schegloff's contention. They would still be at odds, of course, about the role of intentionality and, consequently, about whether the term "rule" as applied to turn-taking is a misnomer or not.

5. For a recent survey of (part of) the field of "text grammar", see Charolles et al. (1986). Other suggestions for theorizing about big chunks of discourse in terms of the grammatical model and/or the speech act model are 'story grammars' for narrative structure and 'macro speech acts' for texts and conversations. Both call attention to the important *pragmatic* fact that there are 'global' or 'macro' intentions of an author or speaker that should be identified as part of the process of comprehension of discourse. But they collapse when they press too hard their underlying analogies, by trying to spell out conditions of 'well-formedness' or of 'satisfaction' for the realization of those intentions. For a classical example of a 'story grammar', see Rummelhart (1975). For an application and discussion of Habermas's notion of a 'macro speech act', see de Almeida (1985).

6. For a more detailed account and comparison with other conceptions of pragmatics, see Dascal (1983) and Chapter 1. It should be clear that, in the context of this article, I am discussing only *socio*pragmatics, not *psycho*pragmatics.

7. In what follows, I continue to exemplify my claims mainly by reference to the point of view of the hearer or interpreter.

8. For an account of some linguistic phenomena that seem to imply the existence of *semantic* constraints on relevance, see Brockway (1981).

9. Hermeneuticists and, more recently, "problematologists" (cf. Meyer 1986), contend that *every* speech act is only understandable as a reaction to some explicit or implicit "question" or "problem". But one need not go as far as this in order to realize the importance of the role of the 'reactive' nature of utterances in *conversations*. For a comparison between hermeneutics and pragmatics, see Chapter 29.

10. For other, more direct connections between pragmatics and legal practice, see Chapter 15 (a and b).

11. For further suggestions along these lines, see Chapter 5.

12. Searle himself distinguishes the background from the 'network'. For further distinctions of types and roles of contextual information, see Chapter 8a.

Chapter 25

Contextualism

> In that Empire, the Art of Cartography achieved such a degree of Perfection that the Map of a single Province occupied a whole Town, and the Map of the Empire, a whole Province. Soon, these Enormous Maps were no longer satisfactory and the Colleges of Cartographers created a Map of the Empire which had the Size of the Empire and coincided with it point by point. The Following Generations, less addicted to Cartography, understood that such a huge Map was Useless and, not without Impiety, delivered it to the Harshness of the Sun and Winters. In the Western Deserts there are still Ruins of the Map, inhabited by Animals and Beggars; in the whole Country there is no other Vestige of the Geographic Disciplines.
>
> Jorge Luis Borges

I

At the turn of the decade, everybody agrees that 'context' cannot be neglected in the study of language; and nobody denies that 'pragmatics' is the branch of the study of language that has to deal with the contribution of context to the production, structure and interpretation of utterances. Yet, these two general theses seem to be as far as agreement on these matters goes, in spite of an intensive research effort during the last decade.

To be sure, the discovery of context in linguistics and philosophy of language is not an achievement of the seventies. In the sixties, and even before, the role of context was widely recognized in many quarters. In fact, context became so pervasive in discussions about language that Max Black probably expressed the feeling of many when he proposed (in 1970) to create a special discipline — 'contextics' — to deal with all the aspects of context relevant to language.[1] But the complexities of context and the variety of ways in which it turns out to be relevant to language seemed to preclude the possibility of quick progress and successful generalization. While some scholars continued to complain about the lack of systematic discussion of the subject,[2] and some

engaged in very broad theorizing,[3] others were quite skeptical about the prospects of the whole enterprise. Chomsky, for one, declared, as recently as 1979, that the formalization (hence, the systematization) of pragmatics is 'premature', for lack of sufficient 'richness' in the domain.[4] The deficiency Chomsky alludes to is not one of data nor of theories (there seem to be plenty of them in this field), but stems from the fact that, according to him, the basic ideas currently employed in pragmatics are "too elementary, vague and without an explicative character" (ibid.).

Among such dubious ideas, the more problematic one are perhaps the concepts of "context" and "pragmatics" themselves. The former can be roughly divided into the linguistic environment of an utterance (the 'co-text', following Bar-Hillel's suggestion), and the non-linguistic situation of utterance (for which Bar-Hillel reserved the term 'context'). But both are vague and difficult to define. The situation of utterance was at first conceived as being describable in terms of a small number of parameters: the speaker, the audience, the spatio-temporal location of the speech event, and a few other 'indices'. But clearly many other elements of the situation may be relevant for the production and interpretation of an utterance: the surrounding objects; the non-linguistic behavior of speaker and audience; the preceding and following events; the socio-cultural environment — to mention only the most obvious factors. As Goffman puts it, "it hardly seems possible to name a social variable that doesn't show up and have its little systematic effect upon speech behavior".[5] Consider, for example, the parameter labeled "the speaker". Who is she? Certainly not a mere physical entity. It must be an entity endowed with complex sets of beliefs, desires, intentions and thoughts. Among the latter, there must be assumptions about the beliefs, desires, thoughts and intentions of the audience, some of which are thoughts about the speaker's beliefs, etc. All these elements can play a crucial role in the interpretation of any utterance produced by the speaker. Not less important is the recognition of the various social functions that can be performed by "the speaker" in his capacity of "source" of an utterance (see Chapter 7). To be sure, not all the facets of the speaker we have mentioned are to be taken into account on every occasion, since "a speaker might be considered a whole set of somewhat different things" (Goffman 1974: 519), on different occasions. But the fact that any of them *might* turn out to be relevant implies that *none* of them can be left out of an account of the linguistically relevant aspects of the context. Thus, it seems that the situation of utterance cannot be reduced to a small set of parameters,

and must be equated with a whole "possible world", as suggested by Stalnaker (1978: 317-18). But it is not certain that even such a radical proposal will be sufficient, since possible worlds do not standardly include the sets of epistemic and other mental states of the individuals that inhabit them.

The co-text presents us with similar difficulties: are the silences in a conversation parts of the 'text' that constitutes the conversation? How many preceding and following utterances are to be considered a part of the relevant co-text? Under what circumstances should the insertion of an utterance in a given co-text be seen as yielding an incoherent or 'ill-formed' text, rather than as a way of demonstrating that the utterance in question has a somewhat weird meaning in that co-text?

In fact, whoever wishes to demonstrate the contextual dependency of the meaning of a sentence usually constructs a story (a co-text) depicting a situation of utterance in which the sentence means something other than its 'normal' meaning. But the imagination displayed by philosophers and linguists in devising such stories is apparently unbounded (and I know of no principled grounds to constrain it, provided they do not violate the rules of logic). Hence, if the "context" should include every factor that can ever affect the interpretation of an utterance, then 'contextics' would have to be indeed the science of everything.

One way of handling this problem is to replace the pre-theoretical, intuitive and unnecessarily vague notion of context by a more satisfactory theoretical construct. It would include only those factors which, "by virtue of their influence upon the participants in the language event, systematically determine the form, the appropriateness or the meaning of utterances" (Lyons 1977: 572). Knowledge relative to these factors, now labeled 'context-of-utterance', would constitute the speaker's 'communicative competence', to be accounted for by linguistic theory. The rest of the real context, which would still be lurking behind our utterances, would have to be handled, as Lyons suggests, by a theory of performance. But such a proposal, though useful, does not really provide a satisfactory way of dealing with the multifarious context. The decision as to whether the influence of a given factor is systematic or not will be often quite controversial and somewhat arbitrary. This is true of some of the factors discussed by Lyons himself, e.g., 'subject-matter'. The factors he discusses, by the way, certainly do not form an exhaustive list of all that should be included in our communicative competence, and it is hard to see how such a list could ever be compiled.[6] Furthermore, there is no reason to suppose that

some factors traditionally associated with a theory of performance — e.g., memory limitations, perceptual strategies — are not 'systematic'. On the contrary, their influence upon linguistic phenomena obeys certain general principles and proceeds in an orderly way, as recent studies have demonstrated (e.g., Bever 1974). Hence, systematicity alone — even supposing it may be clearly defined — will not do as a criterion for inclusion of some factor in a theory of communicative competence (as opposed to a theory of performance). Thus, though Lyons' proposal does perhaps indicate the right direction, it still requires a more convincing implementation.

Presumably, the contextual factors selected by Lyons' criterion (or by a more sophisticated one, when available) are to become the subject matter (or part thereof) of 'pragmatics'. The previous discussion has highlighted the difficulty in establishing one of the borderlines of this discipline: the one that distinguishes pragmatics as the study of communicative *competence* from a theory of *performance*, i.e., a theory of the *use* of language (in communication). But the other borderline of pragmatics, the one that separates it from semantics, is hardly less controversial than the former. Conceptions of semantics vary broadly, so that its relationship with pragmatics can range from full identity,[7] through various degrees of overlapping, to full separation, with the line drawn at a number of different places (cf. Chapter 1 and Dascal 1983).

Consider what has been taken by many to be a typical part of pragmatics, namely speech act theory. One of its key notions is that of 'illocutionary force'. But, in so far as the illocutionary force of certain verbs (the so-called performatives) is a characteristic feature of their meanings, independently of the context of utterance, it certainly pertains to semantics and not to pragmatics to describe and analyze it.[8] Furthermore, since we perform speech acts not only by means of explicit performatives, but whenever we utter a sentence, some theorists have proposed to include in the underlying semantic structure of every sentence an implicit performative indicating its 'standard' illocutionary force. Such a proposal has been strongly criticized, as is well known. Among other things, it has been pointed out that the actual illocutionary force of an utterance not containing an explicit performative (and even of those containing one) depends upon the context of utterance, and cannot thus be associated with a sentence in isolation. One may try to meet this objection by resorting to the more abstract notion of an 'illocutionary act potential' (cf. Alston 1964: 37 ff.), not only to be associated with every sentence, but also to be used as defining the meaning of every word. But, besides the fact that this

proposal seems to raise more problems than it is able to solve (cf. Khatchadourian 1974), it amounts in fact to the transformation of speech act theory into the heart of semantics, with little or no room left for its treatment by an independent pragmatic theory.[9]

Or consider what is perhaps a more typical example of a phenomenon belonging to pragmatics: Grice's 'implicatures'. As has been stressed by Grice himself, it is of vital importance for his theory to distinguish between 'conversational' and 'conventional' implicatures. The former — e.g., the implicature conveyed by the utterance of "He has a good handwriting" as a recommendation for an academic position that has nothing to do with calligraphy — are mediated by the (pragmatic) maxims of conversation. The latter — e.g., the kind of contrast conveyed by an appropriate use of 'but' — are not. The former are clearly 'pragmatic', while the latter are 'semantic', in so far as they must be included in any adequate description of the 'meaning' of words like 'but', even though they do not affect, according to Grice, their truth-conditions. But, as Sadock (1978) has shown, the criteria proposed by Grice (1975, 1978) — mainly cancelability and nondetachability — are unable to provide the required distinction, and no satisfactory alternative is available so far, to my knowledge. Grice himself might argue that the lack of such a distinction does not affect the issue of the borderline between semantics and pragmatics, since both types of implicature presumably belong, according to his view, to pragmatics. But others (e.g., Cohen 1971) are not too eager to accept such a way out, so that the issue has in fact to do with the borderline in question.

One might think these are just terminological questions or, perhaps, a matter of division of labor that should not concern the theorist interested in more substantive issues. But what can be expected from a (new) discipline hinges on the way its boundaries with semantics and performance are to be demarcated, at least in principle. For, if pragmatics is required to do too much on either side (i.e., either to become a complete 'contextics' or to absorb most of semantics), there is reason to fear that it will accomplish too little. Since the tendency to over-emphasize the role of context in the study of language, thus assigning to pragmatics more than it can be reasonably expected to do, is quite widespread, there is room to examine and criticize it. This will be done in what follows. For convenience of exposition, I will dub such a tendency 'contextualism'.

The expansion of pragmatics can be achieved at the expense of any one or both of its neighbors, namely semantics and performance. Just as the notions

of context of utterance and communicative competence (which are supposed to be studied by pragmatics) are the result of a first step of abstraction, so is the domain of semantics, defined by a second step of abstraction. The former sets apart 'systematic' and 'random' contextual factors, leaving the treatment of the latter for a theory of performance. The latter is designed to separate even the systematic influences of the context of utterance from what can be properly viewed as the 'meaning' attached to linguistic expressions. Lyons (1977: 588ff.) calls this second step 'decontextualization'; unfortunately, I have not found a natural label for the first. Now, a contextualist may oppose any one of these steps or both. The interesting thing is that these two moves are not independent of each other. It turns out that there is a direct relationship between the refusal to decontextualize and the need to take into account more contextual factors within the theory. For, objection to decontextualization, i.e., to the assignment of context-free 'meanings' to linguistic expressions, is usually based on the imagination of very special circumstances in which the alleged context-free meanings cannot be assigned to the expressions in question. In order to account systematically for their meanings in such circumstances, it is therefore necessary to include among the contextual factors analyzed by pragmatic theory all the rather idyosincratic factors that characterize those circumstances. In other words, the more 'semantic' jobs are assigned to pragmatics, the more 'performance' jobs it will be required to perform. On the other hand, the very possibility of finding out which contextual factors are in fact operative in the determination of the interpretation of a given utterance depends on the availability of a context-free meaning standardly associated with the sentence used; that is, it requires the proper functioning of a decontextualized semantics.

Given this interdependence of the two possible strategies of contextualism, my criticism will proceed as follows. I will first examine 'moderate contextualism', not because I think there is something intrinsically wrong with it, but in order to show how it substantiates some of the claims of the preceding paragraph; at the same time this will illustrate some of the important systematic contextual factors that pragmatics should handle. I will then go on to discuss a few versions of 'reductionist contextualism', whose shortcomings are more serious. A disclaimer is in order here: by criticizing 'contextualism', I am not denying a role for context in the theory of language. I am only objecting to the exaggeration of such a role. The term 'contextualism' should thus be understood as a label similar to 'psychologism', 'logicism', etc.:

those who coined these terms meant to criticize not psychology or logic as such, but the attempt to reduce all of epistemology to one of these disciplines, i.e., the attempt to extend them beyond their proper domains.

II

Sometimes contextualism consists merely in overlooking the role of non-contextual factors, due to exclusive attention paid to one or more types of contextual influence upon the production and interpretation of utterances. This form of contextualism may be called 'moderate' in so far as it is not in principle reductionistic, i.e., in so far as it does not intend to account for the meaning of utterances exclusively in terms of context. One may describe this position as an attempt to account for most of the total *significance* of an utterance in terms of contextual factors, while neglecting or minimizing (though not nullifying) the contribution of the *meaning of the sentence* (or words) uttered to that total significance. The distinction here employed is adapted from Grice (1975, 1978), who distinguishes between the 'total signification' of an utterance and 'what is said' by uttering a given sentence, and goes on to distinguish further, within the total signification, what is conventionally implicated from what is conversationally implicated. Taking into account these and other forms of what can be implicitly conveyed — as suggested for example by Ducrot (1972) — I have come to think of the total significance of an utterance as an onion-like structure, where several 'layers of meaning' (both implicit and explicit) are hierarchically superposed, and can interact in interesting ways (cf. Chapter 6). These layers, however, do not simply add up to form the total significance. Some of them may merely *contribute* to its determination without being a part thereof. As will be shown later, part of the motivation for reductionistic contextualism may come from overlooking this important fact.

Versions of moderate contextualism differ in the kind of contextual factors they stress. According to the professional bias of their authors, these factors may be mainly social, psychological, cultural, co-textual, etc. Let us consider a few examples.

Labov and Fanshel (1977) try to show that, in order to "get at the 'real meaning' of conversation", one must inevitably go beyond the mere plane of 'what is said', and deal with what is in fact 'being done' by the participants in

the course of the conversation (123). In order to reach that level of understanding, speakers have to know such things as the social roles of interlocutors, in terms of their needs, abilities, obligations and rights (94), whether they have or not this or that particular piece of information (89), whether a certain action is needed or not, whether the interlocutor is willing to perform it (87), etc. But even before such a deeper level of interpretation is reached, the very determination of 'what is said' requires a process Labov and Fanshel label 'expansion', in which co-textual factors play a preponderant role (49-50). Furthermore, the authors admit that there are no precise rules nor limits for the production of such an expansion, i.e., that it is an open-ended process, depending to a great extent on the interpreter's intuitions: "There is no limit to the number of explanatory facts we could bring from other parts of the interview, and the end result of such a procedure might be combining everything that was said in the session into one sentence" (50-51). In this process of interpretation, according to them, the role of the meaning of the sentence uttered is minimal, but not null:

> ... the speaker's utterance does contribute something towards the state of shared knowledge that makes this recognition (of the speaker's intention, M.D.) possible. However, this is only a small part of the structure of commonly recognized social facts that determines the interpretation of the utterance. In our study ... it will become increasingly apparent that most of the information needed to interpret actions is already to be found in the structure of shared knowledge and not in the utterances themselves (Labov and Fanshel 1977: 82).

Yet, no matter how small is the part played by the meaning of the sentence uttered, it cannot be entirely dismissed, because it plays a crucial role in the process of interpretation: its contribution is not so much that of adding a further item to the amount of information conveyed, but rather of leading the hearer to the identification of the relevant items of information in the background of shared knowledge (as well as in other components of context). It has thus a 'control' function comparable to that of a feedback loop in a mechanical device: though using only a very small fraction of the total energy involved in the process, the feedback loop is one of the major factors in determining the actual output of the device.

Notice that Labov and Fanshel are not radical enough in demonstrating how little out of the literal meaning of the sentence uttered is in fact retained as part of the final interpretation of the utterance. Consider their example of an

utterance that is interpreted (through their 'Rule of Indirect Requests') as a request for dusting the room (83):

2.6(b) *"Wellyouknow, w'dy'mind takin' thedustrag an' just dustaround?"*

In this case, a number of words in the sentence used refer directly to the action whose performance is requested, so that they contribute quite substantially to establishing the characterization of what the request is about. But the minimization effect could be more convincingly illustrated by examples in which no word in the sentence used designates specifically the action intended. For instance:

"Aren't you supposed to look after this place?"

Clearly, in order for such an utterance to be interpreted as a request to dust a particular room, the context must supply much more information than in the case of an utterance of 2.6(b) in otherwise identical circumstances. But even here, it is only *via* the semantic relationship linking the literal meaning of the words uttered with the intended referent that the context can be made to supply the relevant information.

Radicalizing still further, one might recall Ziff's intellectual soldier who mumbles "Ugh ugh blugh blugh ugh blug blug" in reply to a question he believes is appropriate to morons (Ziff 1972). In the context, his 'utterance' is easily interpreted by the participants in the 'talk' exchange. This fact might suggest that interpretation has nothing to do with semantics, since nonsense sounds were used. But the message gets through only if the hearer is aware of the fact that the sounds are meaningless, i.e., that they cannot be accounted for by the system of semantic rules of the language. Only after this much is established, can the hearer go on to try to find out what is the significance of the 'utterance'. That is to say, even when no contribution is made by the 'literal' meaning to the total significance of the utterance, the notion of literal meaning, as defined for the language-system presumably used, plays an important role in the determination of such a significance.

A role for literal meaning, similar to the triggering effect described above, can be detected in the 'working out' of conversational implicatures. The discovery of a *semantic* irrelevance is a necessary step in the process that leads to the assignment of a certain implicature as the correct interpretation

of an utterance (cf. Chapter 2). Here too the semantic content of 'what is said' can be completely left out of the final interpretation, but without its role in triggering and guiding the process, such an interpretation could not be reached.[10]

Some artificial intelligence models of language comprehension stress the fact that a very broad range of 'knowledge of the world' is required in order to interpret the simplest sentences. Even if a program is designed to simulate a single 'frame of mind' or set of topics, a broader context is always required. A case in point is Abelson's (1975: 274ff.) simulation of an ideologist, operating within a fixed framework of political premises:

> … we soon discovered that the system could not interpret events (and *a fortiori* utterances, M.D.) sensibly without some reasonable level of mundane knowledge about simple physical properties of persons and objects, independent of ideological import. Thus our system, operating entirely at an abstract level, reasoned that since Latin American radical students had thrown eggs at Nixon (as Vice-President visiting in 1958), it was quite plausible that Fidel Castro might throw eggs at Taiwan. ... (The system was) innocent of the logistics of egg throwing ... as well as many other low-level facts...

Thus, instead of associating fixed (context free) bits of information with any given expression and trying to interpret it within a single frame of reference, such programs must be able to gather the adequate information, for each particular context or task, out of a multitude of sources (see Chapter 3). The organization of such knowledge in terms of 'scripts' (Schank), 'frames' (Minsky), or similar conceptual structures is meant to overcome part of the difficulty in determining exactly which sources are relevant on each occasion. As one of the researchers engaged in devising programs that simulate language comprehension puts it:

> ... the essence of both problem solving and language comprehension lies in knowing what are the relevant questions to ask during a selection or searching activity... that is, in knowing which aspects of the environment could possibly be relevant to the attainment of some goal (Rieger 1976: 102).
> ... the heart of the problem of organizing world knowledge lies in encoding a knowledge of what *other* knowledge bears relevance to the solution of any given task, be it synthesizing a solution to a problem, or searching through algorithmic structures during language comprehension (ibid.).

Now, even though such knowledge is entirely oriented towards context, since its main function is to provide the means "to seek out context", Rieger is aware

of the fact that it must be defined, at some level, in a context-free way. That is to say, there must be a set of procedures standardly associated, say, with a linguistic expression, which provides the basis for the search of the relevant data in the context. These data can in turn interact with and modify the former, but without that basic and fixed set the whole process of interpretation cannot get off the ground. For, if the system does not know, "in a context-free way, what is ultimately relevant to the functioning of the patterns among which it is selecting, how can that (system) ever be made to do different things in different environments?" (ibid.).

Other examples of moderate contextualism can be found in the work of sociologists (cf. Goffman 1974; Carswell and Rommetveit 1971), ethnomethodologists (cf. Gumperz and Hymes 1972; Gumperz 1974; Schenkein 1978), 'text-grammarians' (cf. van Dijk 1977b),[11] and others. Sometimes they may overstate their case,[12] but essentially they do not purport to eliminate the notion of a context-free semantic meaning; they just tend to take it for granted; hence, to overlook its fundamental role.

All these examples clearly show that context can only play a systematic role in the determination of the total significance of an utterance if the literal meaning of the uttered sentence is available in order to lead the way in the selection of the relevant contextual features. (For the two different ways in which the literal meaning can fulfill this function, see Chapter 8a.) Furthermore, they indicate that, even though the literal meaning *need* not be retained as a component of the total significance, if it happens to be retained (totally or partially), then the range and amount of contextual information required in order to 'fill the gap' is reduced. Such a reduction is roughly proportional to the 'amount' of literal meaning actually retained. That is to say: if the significance of the utterance is substantially identical to the literal meaning of the sentence uttered (or logically implied by it), then there is no need to look further into the context for a satisfactory interpretation; on the other hand, when practically nothing of the literal meaning is retained, most of the significance must be gathered from the context. These facts have a direct bearing on the question of the two borderlines of pragmatics. If all the variations in significance ought to be accounted for entirely by semantics, then all possible contextual factors ought to be kept track of, there would be no end to the multiplication of 'senses' of the expressions, the semantic system would be enormously complicated thereby, and there would be no point at all in having a separate pragmatic component in the theory.[13]

III

There is a form of contextualism that is more radical than the one we have considered so far. It claims that there is no such a thing as a context-free literal meaning of a sentence, present in all its utterances. Contextual factors, therefore, must be made responsible for the whole significance of an utterance, with no context-free anchoring to serve as a starting point. On such a view, there can be no principled grounds for distinguishing between semantics and pragmatics, nor, so it seems, between pragmatics and the theory of performance. It represents a holistic approach to language, according to which any distinctions made among the components of a theory of language are merely a matter of convenience, with no possible claim to empirical adequacy. In what follows, I will discuss a few cases of this type of contextualism.

As in the case of moderate contextualism, versions of radical contextualism may differ in the kind of contextual factor which is considered dominant, and to which all meaning is ultimately reduced. We have mentioned *en passant* some varieties: Bloomfield's behavioristic approach (cf. note 7), Firth's socio-cultural contextualism, Austin's speech-act centered theory of meaning (cf. note 9). Another example of a psychologically oriented, but not behavioristic, contextualism, is that of Olson's 'cognitive theory of semantics' (1970). Having observed experimentally that the choice of lexical items for the description of a given object varies with the number and properties of alternative objects present in the environment, Olson goes on to draw somewhat hasty conclusions, first relative to speech production (performance) and then relative to the nature of semantics itself. The former are illustrated by his claim that "semantic decision is based on cognition, the knowledge of the intended referent, not on the rules internal to language" (259). To be sure, 'semantic decision' must rely on knowledge of the intended referent and its alternatives, but Olson presents no reason whatsoever to support his further claim that such decisions do not rely on the knowledge of the rules of language as well. On the contrary: his examples show that if the speaker did not know the standard meanings of words such as *white*, *block*, *under*, etc., the knowledge of the intended referent would be of no help for him in the choice of the appropriate lexical item. His conclusions regarding the nature of semantics are even less founded. He proposes in fact to define all semantic properties in terms of the contextually available alternatives to the intended referent. Thus, for him

> ... ambiguity is a function of the perceived alternatives to the intended referent, not of the rules of language (260),

and

> ... a sentence is anomalous if the listener cannot imagine a context in which that sentence would specify an intended referent (ibid.).

Recall however that there are practically no limits to the ability of speakers to imagine contexts in which the most strange sentence can be assigned a meaning, as well as contexts in which the most common sentence can acquire a meaning different from its 'normal' one. It follows that Olson's definitions are vacuous, since they imply that all sentences are 'ambiguous' and no sentence is 'anomalous'. Furthermore, it is clearly a *non sequitur* to infer anything about the relativity of meaning from the following, perfectly acceptable statement, which is almost a truism:

> Since not all the potential information of the referent as perceived is signaled by a word, we conclude that words (or utterances) neither symbolize, stand for, nor represent referents, objects, or events. They serve rather to differentiate some perceived event from some set of alternatives (265).

Words can serve to differentiate events precisely because they have a standard meaning, independent of the various sets of events among whose members they may differentiate on different occasions. It is only by demanding too much of words (namely, that they be able to describe fully all the possibly relevant features of a referent) that one is led to conclude that they contribute little or nothing to reference.

Another, rather subtle version of radical contextualism is the one defended by G. Harman. Instead of explaining meaning in terms of the 'external' context (social, cultural, etc.) of use, he takes the determinant contextual factor to be 'internal'. For him, the main task of semantics is to characterize the meanings of linguistic expressions in terms of their 'conceptual roles', i.e., of their function as components of thought processes (perception, reasoning, inference, etc. — cf. Harman 1973: *passim*). This kind of functionalism, which might be expressed — paraphrasing Wittgenstein — by the dictum "sentences have meaning only in the stream of thought", is a version of radical contextualism in so far as it maintains that there are no principled grounds to isolate 'meanings' as specific components within the stream of thought-processes. Harman rejects the analytic-synthetic distinction, and argues that there is no evidence supporting the assumption (made by semanticists like

Katz) that knowledge of 'language-independent meanings' can be separated from other forms of knowledge (cf. Harman 1976). If 'pragmatics' is understood as referring not only to the uses of language in communication, but also to its uses in thought,[14] then Harman's thesis implies the denial of the possibility of establishing a distinction between a 'semantics of thought' and a 'pragmatics of thought' and, more generally, between semantics and pragmatics. Furthermore, unless the 'conceptual role' of an expression is arbitrarily restricted to certain specific cognitive functions — a move that could hardly be justified – it is open-ended and variable with the (cognitive) context, thus yielding a similarly open-ended and variable notion of meaning, characteristic of radical contextualism. Since I examine Harman's views elsewhere (cf. Dascal 1997b), I will make no further comments on them here.

Let us turn now to a recent direct attack on the notion of context-free literal meaning (Searle 1978). By letting an apparently innocent sentence like *The cat is on the mat* be uttered in odd situations (e.g., when the mat is stiffened and stands on one of its edges and the cat is drugged and lies on the other edge), Searle attempts to undermine the thesis that "every unambiguous sentence ... has a literal meaning which is absolutely context-free and which determines for every context whether or not an utterance of that sentence in that context is literally true or false" (214). His examples are designed to show that, with the help of appropriate background assumptions, the sentence can be understood quite straightforwardly even in such odd contexts. According to Searle, in each of these cases the speaker says exactly and literally what he means, and the hearer understands him so. But if this is the case, then there is no such thing as *the* literal meaning of the sentence since what is meant and understood and, in particular, the truth-conditions associated with the sentence, vary from case to case. Relative to a given set of assumptions, the truth-conditions may be such that an utterance of the sentence is literally true; relative to another set, it may be literally false; and relative to a third set, "the notion of the literal meaning of the sentence (may) not have a clear application" (211). The problem cannot be solved by listing all the relevant assumptions and representing them in the semantic structure of the sentence — says Searle — because they are indefinite in number. In view of such difficulties with the notion of a context-free literal meaning, Searle proposes the following alternative account:

> For a large class of unambiguous sentences such as *The cat is on the mat*, the notion of the literal meaning of the sentence only has application relative to a set of

> background assumptions. The truth conditions of the sentence will vary with variations in these background assumptions; and given the absence or presence of some background assumptions the sentence does not have determinate truth conditions (214).

Searle is very cautious in his formulations. He stresses that he is not claiming that *all* sentences are subject to a similar relativity of their literal meaning (219). But, of course, by choosing sentences that are very likely candidates for having a context-free literal meaning, he intends to provide support for the more general thesis which would destroy that notion altogether. Furthermore, he declares that he is not denying that sentences have literal meaning: "literal meaning, though relative, is still literal meaning" (220). But if one takes this claim literally, and combines it with his earlier remarks on the indefinite number of contextual variations, it turns out that each *sentence* (not utterance!) has indefinitely many 'literal meanings', and it is at least questionable whether such multiple entities do share with their more traditional homonyms a significant portion of their characteristic properties.

One of Searle's main reasons for relativizing literal meaning is his belief that the variations he has discovered cannot be accounted for by means of the available conceptual tools of semantics and pragmatics:

> these variations have nothing to do with indexicality, change of meaning, ambiguity, conversational implication, vagueness or presupposition as these notions are standardly discussed in the philosophical and linguistic literature (214).

Is it true that no semantic or pragmatic extant concepts can be used in order to explain Searle's examples? Consider first indexicality. As is well-known, this notion has to do, among other things, with the spatiotemporal position of the speaker *vis-à-vis* the objects and events he refers to at the moment of utterance. Now, Searle's cat-on-the-mat example exploits the contextual dependence of the word *on* (215). This word, although apparently non-indexical, can be reasonably assumed to contain an implicit indexical component, akin to that of other location words such as *up*, *down*, *behind*, *before*, etc. In a sense, things are *on* other things relative to the point of view of the speaker. If the speaker were to be turned upside-down, what was *on* would be now *under*, and vice-versa. To be sure, we are able to perform the necessary conceptual 'corrections' in order to compensate for our changed point of view, so that we will probably continue to say that the radio is *on* the table rather than *under* it.[15] Such corrections are based on our current knowledge (visual memories, among other things) of the things which are usually on and the things which

are usually under. It is the use of such knowledge and the habitual corrections it allows for that conceals the indexicality of the words in question. Once the situation is such that things are no longer usual, we have to rely again on that indexicality in order to decide whether something is on or under another thing. Searle's first example (astronauts in a spacecraft watching pairs of cats-mats through the window) is one such unusual circumstance. Although gravitational considerations are of no use in this case, the astronauts are not free to describe the pairs as *cat on mat* or *mat on cat* indifferently. They must respect the spatial relationship obtaining between their own bodies and the pairs observed. Since these relationships are also taken into account in the more usual circumstances — the fact that they are eventually 'corrected' notwithstanding — no change in the 'literal meaning' of *on*, and hence of the sentence uttered, has to be postulated. The example can be accounted for simply by paying attention to the *constant* role of the relevant indexical factor.

And this is not the only constant factor. Certain implications of the sentence are unaffected by the contextual changes of Searle's examples. Whenever the cat is on the mat, the mat is under the cat, the cat is not under the mat, the mat is not on the cat, etc. But consider now another of Searle's examples, the case of the stiffened mat. According to him, when the cat has been jumping from one sticking up object to another and happens to be now on the stiffened mat, *The cat is on the mat* is the correct, literal, and precise answer to the question *Where is the cat?*. However, if such background assumptions are unknown to the hearer, such an answer "is misleading at best and probably should be described as an ingenious lie" (213). The relevant assumptions in this case supply the set of alternatives out of which the sentence is supposed to pick up one as describing the situation. But this phenomenon, characteristic of all or most uses of language must be handled in terms of the available conceptual machinery of semantics and pragmatics. It has to do mainly with the 'point' of uttering that particular sentence in that particular circumstance — which is an important part of what we have called the 'significance' of the utterance. There are various devices that can be used to convey the point of an utterance. Contrastive stress is one example. If one says "The *cat* is on the mat", the hearer may assume that this is meant to exclude alternatives such as "The *dog* is on the mat", "The *doll* is on the mat", and so on; if one says "The cat is *on* the mat", the alternatives excluded will resemble more "The cat is *under* the mat", "The cat is *beside* the mat", etc. To be sure, the precise set of alternatives is a piece of information supplied by the context, but the linguistic

devices employed (including the selection of particular words) guide the hearer in his contextual search for such alternatives. Such a procedure is necessary in 'normal' as well as in 'abnormal' situations, so that no special measures (like the relativization of literal meaning) are required in order to explain it.

In some cases, of the *cat on the mat* type, the question of the choice of alternatives is mainly pragmatic. The relevant principle may be akin to Grice's maxims, say, "Every utterance must have a point". The hearer is entitled to assume that the point — as far as the set of alternatives is concerned — is fairly perspicuous, given the cooperative principle. The misleading effect of the reply on the hearer who is unaware of the other sticking up objects can be explained by pointing out that he was not in a position to grasp the correct set of alternatives. In so far as the speaker deliberately withheld such information from the hearer, he may indeed be accused of (almost) lying. In other cases, the provision of a set of alternatives is a requirement for the semantic well-formedness of the sentence, e.g., sentences containing implicit comparatives, such as *He is big*: for a basketball player, a dog, or an elephant? Here, it is the semantic nature of the comparative that determines the relevant dimension to be looked for as characteristic of the set of alternatives. Although in both types of cases the required set can vary widely from context to context, such a variation — which is what is in fact at stake in most of Searle's examples — not only does not require a relativization of literal meaning: it shows the need for a constant literal meaning which is able to guide the search for the relevant alternatives.

I have reasons to believe that at least some of the other semantic and pragmatic notions discarded by Searle as irrelevant for the explanation of his examples might turn out to be relevant, on closer scrutiny. Certain types of vagueness, for example, are such that they prevent a clear determination of truth-conditions (Khatchadourian 1974: 17ff.), and a judicious use of the various available notions of presupposition might go a long way towards capturing Searle's claims about 'failure of application'.[16] But I will leave aside these possibilities now, in order to deal with the sources of Searle's extreme — and unwarranted — move.

I think the main underlying source for Searle's attack on literal meaning can be put simply in this way: he is demanding too much from literal meaning. He not only identifies the literal meaning of a sentence with full-blooded truth-conditions for that sentence; his use of the notion of 'application' strong-

ly suggests that what he in fact requires from a literal meaning is to have the availability of a procedure for the verification of the actual truth-value of the utterance in a given context. But both claims are unnecessarily stringent. Very few, if any, expressions can satisfy the requirements of verificationism; as for truth-conditions, even strict Tarskians like Davidson admit that they are not determined by sentences alone but by pairs of utterance-cum-context. All that Searle has shown is that literal meaning is not a sufficient condition for the determination of truth-conditions and for the verification of truth in all contexts; that is, he has shown that contextual information is necessary in order to achieve such a determination. But in order to dismiss or relativize literal meaning, what he would have to show is that literal meaning is not even a *necessary* condition for the determination of truth-conditions — and this he has not done.

Searle's demands concerning literal meaning are excessive also in another sense. As we have seen, he assumes that the literal meaning of a sentence literally used should be able to capture the whole significance of the utterance (or a major part thereof). Since literal meaning cannot, for obvious reasons, satisfy such a demand, it is dismissed. But again, Searle merely shows that literal meaning is not a sufficient condition for the determination of significance, a claim with which I have no quarrel. We have indeed stressed the fact that the total significance of an utterance is the result of the interaction of many factors, *one* of which is the literal meaning of the sentence used. Furthermore, we have also pointed out that the role of literal meaning can be such that no part of it is finally retained as a component of the total significance. But the analysis of moderate contextualism has shown, on the other hand, that, however small its role may actually be, literal meaning is a necessary ingredient for the assignment of any significance to an utterance. What Searle would have to show in order to substantiate his claims is not that literal meaning is not a sufficient condition, but that it is not a necessary condition for the determination of significance in every context. And this he has not done.

There would be more to say about Searle's paper, especially with respect to his claim that the relativization of literal meaning does not contradict his own 'principle of expressibility' (221; see Dascal 1983), but enough has been said for the purposes of characterizing and criticizing radical contextualism. The obvious strategy to cope with the arguments of radical and moderate contextualists, in so far as they call attention to hitherto unrecognized forms of context dependency, is to adopt a position that might be dubbed 'moderate

literalism'. Instead of considering literal meanings as somewhat complete entities, identical to or able to determine truth-conditions and significance, such a position would view meanings as 'schematic', incomplete entities, specifying conditions, guiding principles and other means through which their 'gaps' might be appropriately filled by contextual information.[17] The study of these abstract entities would properly belong to semantics, whereas the study of the ways in which contextual information would be embedded in them, after being duly selected, would belong to pragmatics.[18] But, in view of the interaction between them, required for the generation of the end product (language comprehension), each one of them should be developed, from the outset, with the other 'in mind'. This seems to be the best way to avoid the excesses both of contextualism and of its counterpart, 'radical literalism'.

Notes

1. This proposal was made, half-humorously, in the Symposium on the Pragmatics of Natural Languages (Jerusalem 1970). Some papers inspired by the symposium are collected in Bar-Hillel (1971).

2. "... although many recent studies point to the importance of context in language, there is little in the way of a systematic discussion of how and in what ways context affects the interpretation of sentences in everyday interaction" (Gumperz 1974: 17).

3. Goffman's (1974) *Frame Analysis*, which attempts to develop a 'meta-framework' for all contexts or frames is an example of such a broad theorizing about context. A structure for such a 'framework of frameworks' is provided in Chapter 8a.

4. "Per quanto riguarda poi la formalizzazione della pragmatica, la mia convinzione è che sia davvero prematura: non c'è sufficiente ricchezza nel settore da giustificare un tentativo del genere" (Chomsky 1979: 11).

5. Quoted by Lyons (1977: 574n).

6. Lyons of course does not suggest that his list is exhaustive. The factors he lists are: (1) the participants' role and status; (2) spatio-temporal location; (3) degree of formality of the situation; (4) knowledge of the medium (graphic, phonic) appropriate for the situation; (5) subject-matter; (6) province or domain to which the situation belongs (Lyons 1977: 574-585).

7. E.g., Bloomfield's inclusive definition of 'meaning' in terms of S-H, which covers "relation, on various levels, of speech-forms to other speech-forms, relation of speech-forms to non-verbal situations (objects, events, etc.), and relations, again on various levels, to the persons who are participating in the act of communication" (Bloomfield 1955: 236). This is nothing short than the whole of syntax, semantics and pragmatics, as Bloomfield

himself points out (272), and implies that "linguistics…depends for its range and accuracy upon the success of science as a whole" (272-273). For a non-behaviorist version of the full identity thesis, see Firth's contextual theory of meaning (Lyons 1977:607-613).

8. See Cohen's (1973) criticism of speech act theory.

9. Such a position is assigned by Lyons to Austin, and leads him to call Austin's theory a "contextual theory of meaning" (Lyons 1977:735).

10. For an example in which what is retained in the final interpretation from what is said is minimal, see Chapter 3.

11. See Chapter 10 for an approach that might also be characterized as a form of 'moderate contextualism', although the fundamental role of literal meaning is there always kept in view.

12. One example is Carswell and Rommetveit's (1971:5) reading of Uhlenbeck (1963) as saying that "language essentially is meaningless when taken out of context", while all he said was: "Every sentence needs to be interpreted in the light of various extralinguistic data".

13. It should be recalled that for some authors (e.g., Grice 1975; McCawley 1978) one of the advantages of explaining a number of linguistic phenomena in terms of pragmatic principles is that such a procedure frees semantics from unnecessary complications (see Chapter 23).

14. Such a use of the term is grounded in the way it was used by Peirce and by Carnap. For the importance of recognizing the right to existence of a 'pragmatics of thought' or 'psychopragmatics', see Chapters 16 and 18.

15. Stratton's famous experiments with glasses that generated inverted images, which demonstrated our ability to adapt to the new situation by 'connecting' the inverted positions of the objects, illustrates the way in which conceptual schemes can sometimes overcome the data of perception themselves (cf. Gregory 1972:204ff.).

16. Cf., for example, Atlas's (1973) account of the three types of presupposition to be found already in Frege's writings.

17. "It appears reasonable to suggest that words and sentences specify some abstract conditions concerning the nature of the relations and the participating entities to be considered, and that it is the comprehender's ability to think (i.e., create situations such that the relations can be realized) that allows him to understand what the sentence might mean" (Bransford and McCarrell 1974:213). Similar suggestions are made by those who propose to use semantic notions like *script*, *frame*, etc. (cf. Raskin 1977, for example).

18. I have later argued that there are good reasons to view this 'gap-filling' role of context as belonging to semantics, in so far as it is responsible for generating utterance meaning, which is the proper locus for the assignment of truth-conditions (see Dascal 1983 and Chapter 1).

Chapter 26

Does pragmatics need semantics?

A. Defending literal meaning

1. Introduction

The notion of literal meaning was once so unproblematic that it would easily fit the *Port Royal Logic's* description: it was one of those notions that are "so clear that they cannot be explained through others, because there are none which are clearer and simpler than them" (Arnauld et Nicole 1683: 65). But in our century, its fate has not been different from that of so many other notions previously presumed to be "fundamental", and it has been severely challenged.

Literal meaning has come under attack in successive waves; first by philosophers, then by linguists and, more recently, by psychologists. Having discussed elsewhere some of the philosophically and linguistically based attacks against literal meaning (see Chapter 25), I will address myself here to a recent psychological argument that purports to provide empirical evidence to the effect that literal meanings play no role in the process of language comprehension and hence cannot be claimed to have "psychological reality" (Gibbs 1984). Since there is no way to disentangle completely conceptual and empirical issues, it will be necessary first to sketch an alternative conception of literal meaning (Section 2) which will be able to cope with most of the theoretical points raised by Gibbs and others against literal meaning (Section 3). Then, I will consider the empirical evidence that allegedly shows that this notion has no psychological validity and try to rebuff this allegation (Section 4). The next step will be to provide some positive evidence for the "psychological reality" of literal meanings (Section 5). I will conclude by outlining the implications of the discussion for such issues as the theory of metaphor and the distinction between semantics and pragmatics (Section 6).

2. An alternative conception of literal meaning

Few if any authors have given a set of sufficient and necessary conditions for defining literal meaning. An exception to this rule is Katz's well-known "anonymous letter criterion" (Katz 1977: 14). This criterion stresses that literal meanings, whatever they are, should be absolutely context-free. That is to say, they consist in those aspects of an utterance's meaning that a speaker is able to detect exclusively by virtue of her knowledge of the rules of language without any additional contextual information. I believe this criterion can be defended from some of the criticisms that have been leveled against it (e.g., Gazdar 1979: 3-4; see Dascal 1983: 168). I also believe it can be useful in the characterization of literal meaning in a generalized form, which I call the "principle of invariance of meaning" (see Dascal 1983: 28-29). But this is only possible if one hedges the principle so as not to make it an absolutely necessary condition for something to be a literal meaning. In particular, one must allow for the possibility of "neutralization" of certain features of literal meaning in certain contexts and co-texts so that, so to speak, they do not necessarily show up in every possible context (see Dascal 1983: 29).[1]

The preceding move illustrates the general approach I will take to characterize an alternative view of literal meaning, the view I have called " moderate literalism" (see Chapter 25). This approach consists in giving up the attempt to provide a set of necessary and sufficient conditions for something to be a literal meaning. Instead, a number of conditions and the corresponding criteria are described, which are semantically relevant to the characterization of the notion of literal meaning, so that, when a large number of these conditions are satisfied, an aspect of meaning can be reliably seen as belonging to literal meaning; but no single condition is strictly necessary in the sense that its absence would *ipso facto* prevent that aspect of meaning from being so described.[2]

Besides the problem of having used a single criterion as both necessary and sufficient for characterizing literal meaning, traditional accounts have also run into difficulties by putting excessive demands on the jobs that should be performed by literal meaning. For example, the Fregean tradition has tended to require that literal meanings should be able to determine the truth conditions of a sentence or, more generally, the satisfaction conditions of sentences. It is not difficult to show that sentences alone can rarely, if ever, be able to satisfy such a requirement. Not only the well-known phenomenon of

deixis indicates the need for contextual information in order to fully specify truth and satisfaction conditions for utterances; there are also many other ways in which contextual information is required for that purpose (see Dascal 1983: 20-27; see also Chapter 8a). Hence, if such a criterion were applied, the notion of literal meaning would turn out to be empty, which is indeed one of the consequences of Searle's (1978) criticism. A more modest view of the role of literal meaning, which would not claim that it *determines* truth or satisfaction conditions, but only that it somehow *contributes* to their determination, would overcome such obvious difficulties. On the other hand, this would enable one to eventually include in the literal meaning of sentences aspects of meaning such as hints, suggestions, emotive meaning, and so forth (see Dascal 1983: 25ff.) which are not truth- or satisfaction-relevant, but nevertheless comply with other criteria for literal meaning (e.g., that of being "conventionally" attached to certain expressions).

Other notions that have been used in characterizing literal meaning should undergo a similar treatment. For example, the notion that the literal meaning of a sentence is entirely determined by the meaning of its component morphemes and by the syntactic rules of composition — an idea that is in fact the main culprit in Gibbs's attack against literal meaning. Though compositionality is no doubt relevant to the determination of meaning (for otherwise one would have to assume rote learning of huge lists of interpretations), it must also be acknowledged that in many cases such a rote association of a meaning to composite expressions (e.g., formulaic expressions, idioms, frozen metaphors, etc.) does in fact often occur. Also, there are so to speak holistic properties of sentences (e.g., stress and intonation) which cannot be ascribed to any single component and which do not easily fit the notion of syntactic combination. What this shows is that the idea of a *complete* determination of literal meaning by compositional means is unwarranted; however, this fact does not show that compositionality as such should be entirely rejected as a factor in the determination of literal meaning.

The notion of cancelability used by Grice in order to distinguish what belongs to an account of the meaning of an expression and what is only pragmatically derived from it, can be handled in a similar way.[3] Sadock (1978) has shown that cancelability is not a clear-cut criterion. In fact, it can be argued that cancelability is a matter of degree (see Dascal 1983: 26-28; see also Chapter 6). But this fact, though not allowing for the use of this notion as a necessary condition, does not preclude its use as one of the factors that help to

sort out literal meaning from other aspects of meaning — by claiming, for instance, that the easier it is to cancel some aspect of meaning the less literal it should be assumed to be.

The upshot of these suggestions is that literal meaning should be seen as pertaining to those aspects of meaning in which a large number of the above mentioned criteria (compositionality, context invariance, non-cancelability, conventionality, etc.) converge. It is along these lines that I would develop the position I called "moderate literalism". I think it rather unfair to describe this position — as Gibbs does — as being "just a defense of the traditional view" (Gibbs 1984: 278-279).

One important consequence of this position, which we should retain for the subsequent discussion, is that the literal meaning need not be a *part of* the final interpretation of any given utterance (i.e., of what the addressee decides to be its speaker's meaning). In many cases its contribution is entirely absent from the final interpretation (e.g., in some cases of irony; see Chapter 3). In other cases, it hardly contributes any "content" whatsoever to the speaker's meaning (e.g., when someone utters in an appropriate context a series of nonsense sounds). Yet, no matter how minor is its contribution to content, it seems to play a crucial role in the process of interpretation, namely the role of leading the hearer to the identification of the relevant items of contextual information, which have to be used in order to come up with an interpretation.[4]

3. Theoretical criticism of literal meaning

The first theoretical objection raised by Gibbs is specifically addressed against speech-act theory. Following Levinson (1981), he contends that the theory assumes a one-to-one correspondence between illocutionary acts and sentence types. In other words, a part of each sentence meaning consists in the specification of its unique illocutionary force, assigned to it on the basis of its performative prefix, its sentence mood, or some other indicator. He points out the well-known fact that there are many more speech acts than sentence moods (and presumably also more than specific performative prefixes) and that many sentence types bear no direct correspondence to specific illocutionary acts. He argues that speech act theory's only way of dealing with this discrepancy is by invoking the very powerful mechanism of conversational

maxims through which indirect speech acts would be generated and understood. But this, he claims, does not fit the facts:

> For example, when merchants were asked over the phone: *Would you mind telling me the time you close?* They sometimes responded: *Yes, we close at six*. Searle would say that the callers' utterance is literally a question as well as a request. His hypothesis would predict that if the merchants responded on the basis of literal meaning they should have said "*No, we close at six*". The fact that people usually begin their verbal responses with *Yes,* instead of *No,* suggests once again, that the *literal meaning hypothesis,* is simply not an accurate account of what goes on in using speech-acts (Gibbs 1984: 282).

It is not my intention here to defend speech act theory and to evaluate the correctness of Gibbs's description of its claims. It is only fair to say, however, that some of his allegations reveal a certain basic misunderstanding of the theory's aims, at least in its later developments. Basically, speech act theory is a theory of certain types of acts and not a theory of certain kinds of linguistic expressions. As such, it provides a conceptual framework rich enough to accommodate a very large number of different speech acts described in terms of a complex set of parameters (see Vanderveken 1985). It can be further inquired how such different acts are realized through linguistic means, but the theory need not commit itself to the claim that there is a one-to-one correspondence between linguistic means of performance of certain speech acts and the speech acts themselves. In particular, it is no conceptual problem for the theory to admit that not only performative prefixes and mood are instrumental in indicating the speech act performed, but that this role can be fulfilled by a variety of other linguistic means (e.g., intonation, hedging, special kinds of particles, etc.) as well as by contextual means (see Katriel and Dascal 1984).

The claim that illocutionary forces should be specified "solely on the basis of the literal meaning of a sentence" (Gibbs 1984: 283) — if put forth by anyone — is only a further illustration of the tendency to make excessive demands of the construct "literal meaning". Within the framework of moderate literalism sketched in the previous section, this demand is naturally and easily dropped and one can accept without qualms the idea that the force of a speech act is only "tentatively linked" to the sentence actually uttered. Some sentences may be very explicit in their specification of the speech acts they are used to perform whereas others can only offer very general suggestions as to the possible types of speech acts performed through

their use, suggestions that must be completed by contextual information in order to produce an assignment of illocutionary force. Furthermore — and in this I entirely agree with Levinson's suggestion mentioned by Gibbs — this determination doesn't require the use of conversational maxims but is rather performed at the level of determination of what I call "utterance meaning", by means of a set of principles that can be compared with those used in the determination of the reference of deictic expressions. In so far as Searle overlooks the role of this intermediate level of "utterance meaning" and operates exclusively with the dichotomy sentence meaning/speaker's meaning, he has no choice but to invoke for this purpose the conversational maxims and to describe a large number of speech acts as involving indirectness. In so doing, he certainly overloads both the notion of sentence meaning and the pragmatic devices used for conveying indirectness, and he thus becomes vulnerable to the criticism just mentioned. Yet, as I said, there is no intrinsic necessity for his theory to adopt this posture. In fact, a reformulation of the distinction Searle makes on other occasions between context and background would allow him to acknowledge the intermediate level of utterance meaning, in which a specific kind of use is made of contextual information, and thus to overcome such criticisms.

The other difficulty pointed out by Gibbs in speech-act theory is also due to an excessive demand placed upon the notion of literal meaning. This is the demand that sentences used in indirect speech acts "retain their literal meaning as part of what the speaker means" (Gibbs 1984: 282). As already pointed out (Section 2), literal meaning need not be retained as *a part of* speaker's meaning. All that is required is that it *play a role* in the determination of that meaning. Once this is acknowledged, the objection in question just vanishes. Incidentally, in the example quoted above (*would you mind telling me what time you close?*), the unlikely assumption is made that addressees respond to the literal meaning of indirect speech acts rather than to their actually conveyed point. This assumption is at odds with the more general principle that addressees respond to what they perceive as being the *speaker's meaning* of an utterance, which is what sets up for them what I have called a "conversational demand" (see Chapter 2).

The undisputed fact that there are certain formulaic expressions such as the directive *Get in whyncha?*, which are not interpreted by expanding them to their full grammatical forms, but rather in a more or less direct way, is also of no consequence whatsoever for the present discussion. The claim that such

expressions as well as idioms "do not have literal meanings" (Gibbs 1984: 283) only makes sense on the assumption of an absolute compositionality principle for all literal meanings. But looking for compositionality in these cases would be tantamount to viewing, as some schizophrenic patients do, the meaning of words like *repartee* as having something to do with tea. The fact that formulaic expressions and idioms are understood directly as well as the fact that they have a fairly restricted, almost ritualistic, range of use rather indicates that they have a very definite conventional, that is, literal, meaning and not that they lack it.

Another point raised by Gibbs is the inadequacy of the distinction between background and context as drawn by Searle (1980). Background assumptions are very general shared knowledge, which it would be somewhat absurd to miss. For example, when a speaker says: *Give me a hamburger, medium rare*, he expects the hamburger to be of medium size and not contained in a solid lucite cube. This is precisely the kind of assumptions that, if not provided, impair significantly the ability of a computer program such as Abelson's (1975) "Ideolog" to "understand" language as well as the program's ability to "reason" sensibly. Thus, having been provided with general ideological principles but not with very basic "knowledge of the world", the program reasoned that "since Latin American radical students have thrown eggs at Nixon it was quite plausible that Fidel Castro might throw eggs at Taiwan" (Abelson 1975: 274). Contextual assumptions, on the other hand, are, according to Searle, those involved in interpreting particular utterances as ironical, metaphorical or otherwise indirect.

I agree that this is far from satisfactory by way of accounting for the multiple kinds and roles of context in the interpretation of utterances. Elsewhere (see Chapter 8a), a three-tiered organization of context and co-text into a specific, a shallow and a background level has been proposed in order to account for the various roles of co-text and context in the determination of both speaker's meaning and utterance meaning.[5] In addition to this, the phenomenological literature contains a number of distinctions such as topical versus non-topical relevance, focus and horizon, etc., which can and have been employed to elucidate the different types and functions of context (see Chapters 7 and 10).

But the gist of Gibbs's arguments is not against this or that particular way of defining the various types and roles of context. It is rather directed against the assumption that there is some fixed sequential order in which they become

operative in the process of interpretation: "Searle suggests that one kind of knowledge (background) is evaluated before another (context) in understanding a speaker's utterance meaning" (Gibbs 1984: 285). As opposed to this, Gibbs suggests that "knowledge from various sources is used simultaneously in comprehension", and concludes that "understanding can be accomplished without the construction of a literal meaning, regardless of whether it is context free or not" (286). To support this claim, he points out that "given the presence of common ground people will understand directly what speakers mean without any analysis of a sentence's literal interpretation" (287).

As far as sequentiality goes, I am quite prepared to accept a model that postulates parallel or interactive processing. In fact, the model alluded to above does not assume strict sequentiality. In some cases people can guess what the interlocutor is going to say even before he opens his mouth. But even though some hearers would stick to their guesses, no matter what they come to hear later, I would say that in most cases what they actually hear is going to be used at least as providing some means to check the correctness of their guess. And the phrase "what they hear" does not refer exclusively to the sounds they hear but to the sounds with their literal meanings. If there are any rules of interpretation (and I believe there are) they are not algorithmic in nature but rather heuristic. This means that, though they may stipulate a preferred order of consultation of the various elements (literal meaning, different types and levels of context) that will finally yield an interpretation, this order can be in some cases overruled by other considerations (for an example of a possible heuristics, see Dascal 1983).

4. Alleged empirical evidence against literal meaning

We come now to the core of Gibbs's arguments, namely his alleged psychological evidence against literal meaning. A number of experiments are reported in which it is shown that the processing of the non-literal interpretation of utterances (presented in an appropriate context) took no longer than that of their literal interpretation. For example:

> Subjects read stories, one line at a time, on a CRT, ending in either indirect requests, such as *Must you open the window?* (meaning *Please leave the window closed*), literal uses of the same sentences that were considered to be literal questions in their contexts, and direct requests, such as *Do not open* the *window*.

> After each story subjects made a paraphrase judgment for that story's last line… The results of these studies showed that indirect requests took *no* longer to read than either literal sentences or direct requests, when these sentences were read in appropriate context. Without any preceding context, subjects took *much* longer to read and make paraphrase judgments than they did for literal sentences (Gibbs 1984: 287-288).

Similarly, Gibbs reports to have

> found that people take much less time to read and make paraphrase judgments for conventional, idiomatic uses of expressions, such as *He's singing a different tune* (meaning *He has now changed his mind*), than to process literal uses of the same expressions (288).

In another experiment,

> subjects heard stories containing conventional and literal uses of idiomatic expressions. Later on, subjects were presented with recall prompts and asked to remember the target expressions. The results showed, among other things, that subjects' recall of literal uses of idioms was facilitated when they heard idiomatic prompts. Thus cues like *reveal secret* facilitated subjects' recall of literal uses of expressions, such as *You can let the cat out of the bag* (293).

Another series of experiments was conducted in order to show that, besides the fact that literal meanings are not involved in the processing of non-literal meanings, so as to cause eventual delays in the latter, they are not processed at all, not even marginally. This is shown by the fact that there is no facilitation effect for subjects' subsequent responses to literal paraphrase sentences (Gibbs 1983). It was found that facilitation in some cases occur rather in the opposite direction:

> Subjects' sentence/nonsentence judgments to targets that paraphrase the indirect, nonliteral meanings of sentences like *Can you pass the salt?* were facilitated when they read literal uses of these sentences (in this case something like *Are you capable of passing the salt?*). Subjects most likely first analyzed the conventional, indirect meanings of these sentences before deciding that their literal meanings were appropriate (Gibbs 1984: 293).

Unfortunately, all these experiments make use of conventionalized indirect speech acts, or idiomatic expressions, or else frozen metaphors. They only show that a highly restrictive notion of literal meaning, namely, one that assigns to composilionality a key role, is probably wrong. On the other hand, they provide excellent evidence for the fact that another semantic feature of the notion of literal meaning, namely conventionality, is rather important.

Instead of suppressing the notion of literal meaning, these experiments therefore lead to the conclusion that such conventionalized (wrongly called non-literal) meanings of many utterances are in fact the literal ones. This is the conclusion which Gibbs himself — half ironically — in effect draws (293).

In order to convincingly show that literal meanings are unnecessary, one would have to devise experiments proving that they play no role in the interpretation of such clear-cut cases of indirectness as conversational implicatures, radically novel metaphors, and so on. Since irony is often also mentioned as a clear case of indirectness, I turn now to Gibbs' discussion of this topic.

First, he points out that a rule stating that in interpreting irony one is to interpret an utterance as meaning the opposite of its literal meaning could hardly be followed systematically, since the notion of an "opposite" is obscure. Sometimes, he argues, the opposite may be semantically or logically related to the literal meaning, but most of the time it may be only pragmatically, i.e., circumstantially related to it. This is no doubt true, and indeed there is no need to phrase the rule in question with the definite description "*the* opposite", suggesting a unique candidate, logically or semantically determined, for this role. As already noted, pragmatic rules of interpretation are heuristic devices. What this putative rule should say, therefore, is something like "If you have any reason to suspect that an utterance is ironical, then try to find an opposite to its literal meaning, along some dimension of opposition suggested by the context of utterance".

What happens with irony, in this respect, is quite similar to what happens with the interpretation of connectives such as *but*. Here too the notion of an "opposition" or "contrast" between the two conjuncts is present. Yet, unlike what some semantic accounts of the functioning of this connective have assumed, the contrast in question need not be "semantic" at all, as is illustrated by sentences such as *He is a politician but he is honest*. What the semantics of *but* (in one of its senses) tells us is that one must look for the relevant contextual dimension with respect to which the contrast between the two conjuncts conjoined by *but* is to be construed. In the example above, the dimension in question might be, for example, reliability: the first conjunct suggests unreliability, the second reliability, and the overall "argumentative" weight of the utterance would favor the latter (for details, see Chapter 6). From this point of view, the interpretation of a *but* utterance would require a search of the context in order to "fill in" the contrastive slots provided by the literal

meaning of the sentence. Such an analogy between the workings of *but* and of irony suggests that there may be more "'literalness" in irony than is usually believed (see Weizman 1984a; see also Chapter 8a).

Gibbs reports that he found that sarcastic indirect requests took much less time to process than literal uses of the same sentences or non-sarcastic indirect requests. The example he gives is *Why don't you take your time getting the ball?* meaning *Hurry up and get the ball* (290). He also reports another experiment, which shows that people remember sarcastic utterances better than non-sarcastic ones (291). I don't know the details of these experiments, so far unpublished. But I would conjecture that the former finding might be explained by the fact that the relevant "opposition" or "contrast" was particularly perspicuous or salient in the context provided for in the sarcastic indirect request. As for the latter finding, it could be a result of the fact that irony is a pronouncedly marked rhetorical device, a point that could be eventually related to the fact that people tend to recall better and more easily draw negative rather than positive conclusions in syllogisms (cf. Pollard and Evans 1981). It is also possible that better recall for ironic utterances has to do with the very indirectness of the interpretation of such utterances: since an ironical interpretation is, in a sense, a construal, almost entirely contributed by the hearer, of the speaker's utterance, the hearer should better recall the wording of the utterance for further checking of the correctness of his interpretation. Whatever the explanation, these findings certainly do not warrant the conclusion that there is no role for literal meaning in the interpretation of irony. In particular, it is hard to believe that the local meaning of the word *fine* plays no role whatsoever in the determination of the ironical interpretation of an utterance of *A fine friend you are*, no matter how "directly" such an interpretation is reached in any given context.

To sum up this section, I would say that the empirical evidence presented by Gibbs shows at most that strictly *compositional* meanings are not usually "computed" by listeners in understanding a rather limited number of more or less "frozen" linguistic expressions. On a less restricted view of literal meaning, which considers not so much compositionality, but stresses conventionality as one of the semantically relevant features of this notion, the very same evidence turns out to support, rather than to go against, the existence of literal meanings. Therefore, these findings *do not* warrant the claim that such a notion is useless in a psychological (or other) account of language use. Instead, they suggest ways of refining and elaborating this notion, which will be

needed, in any event, to account for those uses of language which go beyond the exploitation of frozen composite expressions.

5. The psychological reality of literal meaning

Leaving aside the attempts to *disprove* the existence of literal meanings, let us consider now uses of language which, though certainly peculiar in many ways, seem to provide — on their standard accounts — positive evidence for the "psychological reality" of those elusive entities. The uses of language to be considered here, namely, in jokes, in hypnosis, and in dreams, offer a broad sample of aspects of language-use, since they involve communicative (jokes, hypnosis) and non-communicative (dreams) uses, as well as "normal" (jokes) and "altered" (hypnosis, dreams) states of awareness.

5.1 Jokes

Consider first the ability of practically any normal speaker of a language to understand jokes (as well as puns and other manifestations of verbal humor). To be sure, as in any other field of psychology, one cannot say that there is only one, universally accepted account of the mechanism underlying such an ability. Nevertheless, Freud's pioneering work in the field is still widely accepted by both psychologists and linguists, and can accordingly be relied upon for the present purposes. The most relevant feature of this account, for our purposes, is the claim that a necessary (but not sufficient) condition for a story to be understood as a joke is that it should operate at least at two *detectable* levels of meaning.[6] Essentially, a joke consists of a piece of discourse having at least two quite distinct and opposed "meanings". The audience is cleverly led to interpret the story as having one of the meanings (and, thus, to "forget" — at least temporarily — the other), while in the end it turns out that the "correct" interpretation was the other one. I have analyzed this process in Chapter 16. For our purposes here, however, I will rather rely on Fonagy's (1982) account of some jokes and their underlying mechanism.

Among the ways in which the required "double meaning" can be generated, Fonagy mentions the following:

(a) "Two circles of ideas can be brought together by the same word,

making use simultaneously of its primary and secondary meaning" (Fonagy 1982: 37). Here is an example of this procedure:

> In Vienna before the First World War, a dashing young Austrian officer tried to obtain the favors of a fashionable courtesan. To shake off this unwanted suitor, she declared that "her heart was, alas, no longer free". He replied politely: "Mademoiselle, I never aimed as high as that".

According to Koestler, the joke depends upon the fact that "*high* is bisociated with a metaphorical and topographical context. The coat is turned first metaphorically, then literally". That is to say, in order to be able to understand the joke, in the fraction of a second he is allowed to "process" it and laugh or smile, the "literal" or "primary" meaning must be available to the hearer,[7] though the "metaphorical" meaning is dominant (in the context of the story). This does not show, of course, that the metaphorical meaning is computed out of the literal meaning, but it surely shows that the literal meaning has "psychological reality" and must be at least "in the offing" for ready usage by the listener.

Another way of generating double meaning is this:

(b) "Double meaning may be the consequence of a simultaneous synchronic and diachronic (etymological) analysis of an expression. The first reading is based on the actual semantic value of the expression, it is followed by a second reading which reevaluates the original meaning of the components" (Fonagy 1982: 38). An example of this is one of the many Jewish jokes discussed by Freud:

> The first Jew asks: Have you taken a bath? The second replies asking the other in return: Why? is there one missing? (Freud 1905: 49)

Though Freud points out the shift in contrastive stress (from *bath* to *taken*) and Fonagy speaks of diachronic and synchronic readings, the example does not differ essentially from the preceding one: the "primary" meaning of the expression must be available, even though its "secondary" meaning has become conventionalized into an idiom. This case is particularly relevant for it bears much resemblance to Gibbs' examples, discussed in section 4.

Another case is this:

(c) "The ambiguities of grammatical surface structure are a permanent potential source of double meaning provided that the context does not exclude either of the two possible interpretations" (Fonagy 1982: 38). Example:

> A Lieutenant in the Austro-Hungarian army asks a private: Now tell me, Bacharach, why should a soldier gladly offer up his life for his king? –You're absolutely right, Sir! Why should he?

The private's question can be either interpreted as a real wh-question or else as a rhetorical question (a negative assertion), though the context favors the first interpretation. Here again, though the secondary meaning (rhetorical question) is the one immediately detected, the primary meaning must remain available for the listener to understand the joke.

An important feature noticed by Fonagy in this example — but also present in the others — is that the context cannot be such as to *exclude* the disfavored interpretation. For the same reason, it cannot be such as to convey the favored interpretation in an entirely explicit and definitive way (see Chapter 16).

Finally, consider the following type of case:

(d) "A sentence without being idiomatic may have both a general and a restricted meaning, the latter due to the frequent use of the sentence in a typical, recurrent situation. The latent double sense may become apparent in jokes playing on the contrast of the restricted and the general meaning of a statement such as 'I cannot complain', implying either that one has no reason to complain (restricted meaning) or that one must not complain (general sense)" (Fonagy 1982: 40). Example:

> An immigrant has come to France from a country having a tough dictatorial regime. Here is why he emigrated:
> – Was the living standard so low?
> – No, I couldn't complain.
> – Were the housing conditions so bad?
> – No, I couldn't complain.
> – Was unemployment so high?
> – I couldn't complain.
> – Why did you come to France then?
> – Because here I *can* complain.

Though there are other mechanisms involved in joke understanding, the devices exemplified above account for a large number of the most effective jokes, and they certainly require a distinction between a conventionalized, more or less compositional, more or less context-free reading of an expression, and a reading that is conveyed in a more indirect way, though eventually grasped more immediately.

5.2 Hypnosis

Some uses of language in hypnotic condition may be brought as further evidence for the "psychological reality" of literal meaning.[8] According to one widely held conception, hypnosis is a special "state of mind" or condition. In such a condition, the individual operates at the level of basic processes. And one of these basic processes consists in understanding linguistic expressions on the (almost exclusive) basis of their literal meanings. Let me first give some examples, and then proceed to discuss their significance in the eyes of experts, and their implications for our purposes here.

Hilgard (1968) devotes an entire chapter to what he calls "distortions of meaning," thus characterized:

> There are distortions of meaning, when all the "givens" from the stimulus may be accurate; although there is no distortion of shape, or contour, or color, there is distortion of reference, so that, for example, a clearly perceived object may not be recognized for what it is, or may be given a wrong name (192).

The cognitive distortions of this kind investigated by him (with subjects in hypnotic state) include *agnosias* (losses of ability to recognize familiar objects) and *aphasias* (disturbances in the use or understanding of speech), and they involve both the denotative and the connotative components of meaning. As it turns out, agnosias and aphasias could not be clearly distinguished in Hilgard's experiments, since disturbances in speech tended to become losses of the ability to handle familiar objects. Let us examine his examples.

> (a) Subjects were given the following suggestion:
>
> When I reach the count of five and after that until I tell you otherwise, you will no longer know what the word *house* means. It will be as if you had never heard the word before. When you hear the word *house* you will have the same feeling you would have if you saw or heard a foreign word with which you had no familiarity or knowledge. It will mean absolutely nothing to you! (197).

The subjects were then tested in two ways. The hypnotist showed them six pictures, and the subjects were requested to point to the relevant picture as the hypnotist named them, one at a time. Passing the test meant being unable to point to the picture of the house upon hearing the word *house*. Only 9% of the "high" (i.e., highly hypnotizable) subjects pointed promptly to the appropriate picture, and 11% after some hesitation. That is to say, 81% of these subjects "passed" the test, i.e., lost the ability to understand the word *house*. The effect

was less pronounced in "medium" (29%) and "low" (around 6%) subjects, but it was still present. In high subjects, the effect also spreads to a related word, *home*, for which 9% of the subjects passed the test. In the second part, the hypnotist pointed to the pictures (one at a time), and the subjects were asked to name them. Only 5% of the high subjects used the word *house*; 14% completely failed to name the picture; the rest used alternative words (e.g., *home*, *building*). Though the suggestion referred only to the "loss of meaning" of *house* and not to the inability to recognize the object, the latter was also present to a surprising degree in the high subjects, though not in the medium and low ones. These, however, also avoided the use of *house* (50% of the medium subjects, and around 20% of the low ones).

(b) A similar test was conducted with the word *scissors*. Here, in addition to the ability to recognize the named object and to name it upon presentation (for these tasks results were similar to those with *house*), subjects were asked to show how to use the object with paper. This was intended to check "how literally the subject took the loss of a name", since the suggestion said nothing at all about use of the object (198). The result showed that "many took the loss of name to be general loss of familiarity with scissors, and showed great awkwardness in trying to use the scissors (nearly half of the high subjects)". Many of them tried to use the scissors "as a dagger, or pencil, or in some way other than cutting" (199).

Hilgard draws, amongst other things, the following conclusion from these experiments:

> The hypnotic subject is said to be very literal-minded, interpreting a suggestion for exactly what it is: this is true in some sense, in that suggestions tend to be little criticized, but in another sense it is not true, for the subject readily imposes his own interpretation upon a suggestion in accordance with the kind of behavior he perceives the hypnotist as having in mind when he gives the suggestion (193).

In a sense, the generalization of the loss of meaning to a loss of familiarity indicates — as suggested by Hilgard — that subjects did not take the instruction to forget the meaning strictly *literally*. Nevertheless, on closer inspection, the results testify to a striking influence of literal meaning. If we assume that the "meaning" of *scissors* involves in one way or another a functional characterization such as "used to cut", then "losing the meaning" implies losing such a functional characterization of the object referred to by the word. The categorization afforded by the (literal) meaning of an expression is not confined to the linguistic level, but serves also as the basis of handling (recognizing, using)

the objects in the world, at least to some extent. In this sense, the subjects took the instructions very literally indeed, for they forgot the meaning in the broadest sense of the term.

(c) The distortion of 'affective' meaning was tested by presenting the subjects with a "joke" that was not funny, after the following suggestion:

> I am going to read you a very funny statement. I think after you hear it you will agree that it is very funny and humorous, the kind of statement that gives people a good laugh. I hope very much that you will enjoy it to the fullest (193-194).

The "joke" was: "The whale is undoubtedly one of the largest mammals alive today". Surprisingly, 93% of the high subjects either smiled or chuckled! (The results are inconclusive, though, since some non-hypnotized subjects also laughed because of the incongruity of the whole situation). Assuming that the result is reliable, one could say not only that subjects followed "literally" the instruction to laugh, regardless of the value of the "joke",[9] but also (and more significantly) that, being deprived of the ability to detect indirect or implicit meanings (which is, as we have seen, a necessary condition for understanding jokes), they were unable to understand a joke and had to rely entirely on the hypnotist's judgment on this matter. In order to substantiate this claim, one would have to investigate whether hypnotized individuals show significant difficulties in understanding jokes.

(d) A subject reports that, when told by the hypnotist that she had no hands, she actually felt she didn't: "My silly-looking long sleeves with only circles at the end where the hands would be. Only those ridiculous ruffles were there" (Hilgard 1970: 37). And yet, she was also aware this was not true: "Somewhere else I absolutely know I have hands. I know they're not cut off. I'm exploring the sensation of not having them. There's no anxiety" (37). She compares hypnosis with "dreaming when you know you're dreaming": "Nothing is really wrong because some part of you is always aware that it's hypnosis though you don't verbalize it at all, not even to yourself" (36). Hilgard comments on this as follows:

> This complex participation of the hypnotic subject in his own performance, even though it follows very literally the suggestions by the hypnotist, is one of the puzzling aspects of hypnosis, including as it does this continued limited awareness of the observing ego that what is perceived as real is in some sense not real (36).

Such a description of a double awareness applies straightforwardly to example (e) below. It would seem that the "literalness" is what commands, the "auto-

matic" performance, while the non-literal or other interpretations remain at a level of awareness that does not exercise effective control over behavior and feelings.[10]

The above examples do not address themselves directly to the question of whether in presence of an utterance that would normally be understood non-literally, a hypnotized subject interprets it literally. In order to investigate this possibility, a few experimental sessions were conducted. The results have not been tested statistically or otherwise. Here is an example:

(e) In an experimental session conducted by Varda Dascal, two subjects, male and female were hypnotized. Upon the instruction "You will raise your arm over her" (in Hebrew: *Ata tarim et hayad aleia*), the male subject slowly and gently raised his arm over her head. After the session, he reported that he clearly understood the "metaphorical" sense of the expression (= beating), and nevertheless he felt that his arm rose, automatically as it were, with no violence whatsoever in his movement. Alongside with cases such as these, which suggest that literal meaning is operative under hypnosis, there were also results that apparently go against such a conclusion. For instance, when one of the subjects was asked "Do you have cigarettes?" he immediately offered to the hypnotist his pack of cigarettes, and so did the other subject, who was not even addressed. That is to say, both "understood the hint" and interpreted the speech act immediately as a request, rather than as a question. Unfortunately, no experiments have been conducted (as far as I know) in order to check whether hypnotized persons understand implicatures of a less conventionalized nature, so that the results on this issue remain inconclusive.

5.3 Dreams

One of the main characteristics of the use of language in dreams is the fact that the linguistic material is treated by the "dreamwork" with much less regard for the normal constraints imposed by the syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic rules of language use. Among other things, this allows for the reliance upon word associations or puns that disregard semantic content (being just phonologically or even graphically based), syntactic composition, etc., (cf. Chapter 16). In many dreams, formulaic expressions, idioms, or slang, which have a conventionalized global meaning, are used on the basis of constructing — usually, but not always, by pictorial means — an alternative "literal meaning" for such expressions, based on the meanings of their components. For ex-

ample, a dream may be about a canceled cricket match, whereby it expresses the feeling that something was "not cricket"; or a dream depicting a bare chest may express the idea of "getting something off one's chest" (Faraday 1976: 95). In order to be able to build such "literal" pictorial interpretations of conventionalized expressions, through which the dream in fact conveys their conventional meanings, both ways of construing the meanings of these expressions must be somehow available to the dreamer (and not only to the interpreter of the dream), and hence both must have some kind of "psychological reality".

The uses of language in dreams, jokes, and hypnosis deserve much more attention than I could afford here. But enough has been said, I trust, to indicate that the role of literal meaning cannot be easily ignored in such uses.

6. Semantics, pragmatics, and metaphor

Gibbs draws two main theoretical conclusions from his criticism of literal meaning: (a) current accounts of metaphor, which make use of the distinction between literal and non-literal meaning, are on the wrong track; and (b) the distinction between semantics and pragmatics, also based on the ability to distinguish between literal and non-literal meaning, should be abandoned, for there is "little motivation in a psychological theory for making a separation between semantics and pragmatics"; it should be replaced by some "interactive-parallel" theory of language processing (Gibbs 1984: 298-299).

Such conclusions indicate that, although his evidence only shows that there are cases of language understanding in which a putative stage of "computing the literal meaning" is not detectable, and hence that such a stage is not an *obligatory* one (cf. 287), he is willing to go beyond this, and to dispense with the notion of literal meaning altogether. Were it not for this clearly detectable trend in his argument, I would — and should — not be motivated to launch a defense of literal meaning. But such a trend leads to the highly objectionable position of "radical contextualism" (cf. Chapter 25), a view that has not so far been articulated so as to present a viable account of the majority (and not merely of a few) of the uses of language. Were literal meanings (in some reasonable version of this construct) to be totally ruled out, then *all* of our understanding of language would have to be accounted for by "context" alone. But the context is potentially infinite and indefinite as a source of possible "meanings". The denial of the existence of a more restricted set of meanings,

which serves either as a base or as a frame of reference for the subsequent search of meaningful aspects of context, seems to preclude the possibility of developing a satisfactory *psychological* account of the process of comprehension. At any rate, the failure of the behaviorist program in providing an account of meaning in these terms is perhaps a good indication of the difficulties — if not sheer impossibility — facing any approach of this kind.

Once such a possibility is left aside, what has to be done is to reformulate the notion of literal meaning, so as to eliminate the drawbacks due to both its characterization in too restrictive and in too ambitious terms. This, in turn, allows for a new, principled demarcation between semantics and pragmatics, employing a three-fold distinction between sentence-, utterance- and speaker-meaning (cf. Dascal 1983: 32ff; see also Chapter 1). Among other things, this move does not restrict the scope of semantics to an account of relatively context-free and conventionalized sentence-meanings, but permits also the inclusion in it of specific kinds of context dependency. This opens the way for integrating into semantics, in a very natural way, phenomena such as the reliance upon general schemata (Rummelhart 1979: 85) in the comprehension of utterances (see Dascal 1983: 36). In such a way, one introduces a differentiation of the roles of "context" which gives to this notion more specificity and consequently a higher explanatory power. Within this framework, there is no need to assume an invariable "bottom up" order of processing, and to exclude cases of "top down" or "parallel processing", though I would think that there might be alternative heuristics or strategies of comprehension, one of them being a "bottom up" one, which would start from sentence-meaning (as some of the examples of section 5, as well as of normal language use, suggest). What must not be overlooked, however, is that, even when a "top down" strategy is used, at some point literal meanings are likely to be needed in order to complete and/or check the tentative interpretation.

A discussion of the implications of such a reformulation of the notion of literal meaning for the theory of metaphor lies beyond the scope of the present paper. But some remarks are in order. Gibbs defends the elimination of the distinction between the metaphoric and the non-metaphoric, but in fact his arguments are directed only against a certain conception of metaphor that relies upon that distinction. They don't have, therefore, the punch he believes they have. The theory in question assumes that a metaphorical interpretation of an utterance is generated whenever the sentence uttered violates some semantic rule or, more generally, when it is semantically 'anomalous'. Against

such a theory, Gibbs mentions an experiment about the understanding of the sentence *Some jobs are jails* (294). In this experiment it was found that, even though the subjects decided correctly that the sentence was *literally* false, the fact that it also had a true *metaphorical* interpretation (something like: "many persons feel restricted by their jobs") led to a significantly higher reaction time in the subjects' response, as compared with cases in which no true metaphorical interpretation was immediately available (Glucksberg et al. 1981). His conclusion is that:

> Any theory which asserts that metaphoric meaning is computed on the basis of a failed attempt to compute a literal meaning cannot explain why metaphoric meaning should interfere with processing when only a literal interpretation is required (Gibbs 1984: 294).

I have no idea how Gibbs and other psychologists are able to establish that the factor responsible for the delay is the existence of the true metaphorical interpretation. One could as well suggest that the reason is the difficulty in determining what the sentence *literally* means, which is a necessary condition for assessing its truth-value. Such a difficulty, in turn, might be a consequence of a lack of match between the predicate and the subject of the sentence, which is not far from a semantic 'anomaly'. But even if Gibbs's account is correct, one could imagine that, although the subjects have been told to pay attention only to the literal meaning, they automatically generate or infer *also* a metaphorical interpretation, precisely because of the difficulty of generating a literal reading in the first place.

If it were established that the theory of metaphor against which Gibbs argues is indeed incorrect, this, in itself, would not justify the suppression of the distinction literal vs. metaphoric, since that theory is nothing but an application of this distinction. Other theories of metaphor, e.g., the interaction theory (which Gibbs seems to favor), are not only compatible with the distinction in question, but even require it, at least in the modified version of 'literalness' I have proposed (see Dascal 1983: 154).

The excessive emphasis on the undeniable similarities between our understanding of metaphorical and literal expressions leads Gibbs and others to underestimate the differences, no less undeniable, and to postulate that the two types of interpretation of an utterance are rather a matter of degree and not of kind (297). In order to explain, with the help of such an axiom, the fact that people are able to tell, correctly and without difficulty, whether a sentence

is used metaphorically or literally, Gibbs resorts to a notion of familiarity with the context:

> What often appears to be a literal meaning of a sentence is just an occasion-specific meaning where the context is so widely shared that there doesn't seem to be a context at all (Gibbs 1984: 297).

In addition to the exclusion of the "context" in all that regards semantics and literalness — a view I have already criticized (see Chapter 1) — Gibbs's claim implies that if the sentence *He is a lion* were used referring (in a context) to an example of courage recognized by all participants in the exchange, they would have to classify it as literal rather than as metaphorical, a prediction which, I believe, would prove to be false.

The similarities between literal and metaphorical interpretation loom large if one considers — as does Gibbs — frozen metaphors. But, instead of justifying the abandonment of the distinction literal vs. metaphoric, what this suggests is the need to characterize such a distinction in such a way as *not* to confuse frozen and creative metaphors. According to the broader conception of literal meaning sketched above, the conventional meaning of frozen metaphors is 'literal' precisely because of its conventionality. Its description, therefore, belongs to semantics, and its understanding does not require the intervention of the powerful devices of pragmatics such as are the conversational maxims. Such devices — or possibly other pragmatic means — are required only for creative metaphors. In this way, there would be difference of kind and not only of degree in the understanding of these two types of utterance. Rummelhart's (1979: 79) suggestion, mentioned by Gibbs, that

> The classification of an utterance as to whether it involves literal or metaphorical meaning is ... a judgment that can be reliably made, but not which signals fundamentally different comprehension processes,

amounts to a suppression of any *psychological* basis for such judgments.

When Gibbs goes on to specify more precisely how intuitions of literalness and non-literalness are to be distinguished, he in fact reverts to a distinction of principle, and not of degree, between literal and metaphoric. He makes use of Ortony's (1979) distinction between "high-salient" and "low-salient" predicates associated with a concept. The sentence *Encyclopedias are like dictionaries* is a *literal* comparison because there are high-salient predicates of the second term (*dictionaries*) which are also high-salient predicates of the first (*encyclopedias*). But the sentence *Encyclopedias are like gold mines* is a

metaphorical comparison because the high-salient predicates of *gold mines* are only low-salient predicates of *encyclopedias*. In both cases the comprehension process should be the same, on this account, since it is always a question of determining whether the high-salient predicates of the second term (the 'vehicle') are high or low-salient predicates of the first (the 'topic').

One should observe, first, that the distinction between the two types of predicate corresponds to a fashionable version of the distinction between essential and accidental properties, without, of course, the rigidity such a distinction had in traditional logic and metaphysics. In Achinstein's (1968) terminology, they correspond, respectively, to predicates that are "semantically relevant" and just "relevant." Such a distinction is heir of what remains of the analytic/synthetic opposition after the liberalization of the notion of literalness is achieved. Hence, the notion of 'literal meaning', which corresponds quite precisely to the set of high-salient predicates, is necessary for Ortony's account of metaphor. Among other things, what metaphor does is to assign saliency to some predicates of the topic, which, under normal circumstances, are low-salient. That is to say, metaphor momentarily *modifies* the hierarchy of predicates associated with a term, a process that obviously requires the previous existence of such a hierarchy. Secondly, concerning the process of comprehension, one may suppose that a comparison (or any other form of predication) is normally understood as establishing a relation between the high-salient predicates of the two terms compared. Only when the establishment of such a relation fails at the level of high-salient predicates, one tries to establish it in terms of low-salient predicates of the topic. We have here, therefore, not only two different processes of understanding, but also a new version of the semantic anomaly theory, rejected by Gibbs.

One should abandon the practice of stressing either the continuity (e.g., Rummelhart 1979: 80) or the discontinuity between metaphorical and non-metaphorical uses of language, depending on one's *parti pris* on the literal meaning dispute. Both aspects should rather be acknowledged: without continuity, one could hardly account for both the ontogenetic and the diachronic process of constant generation and shift of literal meanings, whereas without discontinuity one would be unable to explain the fact that metaphorical language is not only just "understood", but is also perceived and *marked* as "different", in much the same way as irony is so perceived (see section 4). It may be true that, as claimed by Rummelhart (1979: 80), the child, when acquiring language, understands in the same way the metaphoric and the

literal. But it is no less true that the child learns, at some moment in its linguistic career, to distinguish between them, and from that moment onwards the two are interpreted in ways that are essentially distinct.

B. On the roles of context and literal meaning in understanding

In my recent defense of literal meaning (Chapter 26a), my main concern was to show that such a theoretical construct is "psychologically real". At least in one sense, Gibbs (1989: 249) grants this point. For he acknowledges that the meanings I call 'literal' are among the "variety of products that result from language understanding", and adds: "Nobody disputes this as an aspect of psychological reality". What he disputes is that there is anything special about these products, which would grant them a privileged status (a) as being somewhat 'basic' or 'primary', (b) as being the output of a unique cognitive process, and (c) as playing some necessary role in the processes involved in engendering the other, non-literal, products of language understanding.

Gibbs argues against (b) and (c) and concludes that (a) cannot be the case, since it lacks any distinct processual base. His emphasis on process as the hallmark of psychological reality is of course in line with one of the main assumptions of the dominant information-processing paradigm in cognitive psychology. Though I have qualms about this paradigm, I will accept for the sake of the argument the narrowing down of the discussion to the issue of the role of literal meaning in the processes of language understanding. I will try to show: (i) that the new empirical evidence mentioned by Gibbs does not support his denial of (c); (ii) that, on Gibbs' own assumptions, it is necessary to assign special properties to the processing of literal meaning; and consequently, (iii) that it not only makes sense but is also necessary to claim that, in the process of understanding, literal meaning occupies a distinct, 'basic' position. In addition to this, I will discuss the difference between moderate literalism and its competitors *qua* accounts of the understanding process, and conclude by an excursus on the diverging views of linguistic communication that underlie this debate.

Literalism, contextualism, and in-betweens

Gibbs contends that the position I call 'moderate literalism' is ill-defined and inconsistent when applied to linguistic information processing. My position should be better understood if compared with its three immediate competitors, namely, literalism, contextualism, and moderate contextualism. Literalism conceives of literal meanings as complete, well-defined entities, associated with their respective linguistic signs. For words, such entities are "concepts", characterized by a set of necessary and sufficient conditions of application. For declarative sentences, they are propositions or truth-conditions. No linguistic sign can be properly used if it doesn't have a literal meaning in the above sense, and every such use requires the users to actually have in mind (i.e., processing) that literal meaning. Contextualism regards the literal meanings as described by literalism as fictitious entities. It stresses the variability of meaning with context, and claims that linguistic expressions acquire their meanings in use, rather than carrying pre-existent meanings that are put to use. Understanding an expression has nothing to do with mentally evoking/applying a (fixed) set of conditions associated with it; it is rather a matter of seeing how the expression fits in a habitual or new context of use.

Moderate literalism is moderate in two ways: by modifying literalism's rigid conception of literal meaning and by granting its share to context. The former is achieved by both restricting and enlarging the scope of literal meaning. The restriction consists in rejecting the view that literal meanings are complete and well-defined logical entities such as definitions and propositions. For many — perhaps most — words the criteria for their proper application are essentially vague, the "concepts" to which they are associated may be grasped in terms of prototypes rather than of definitions, and their meanings may comport a large syncategorematic component. Similarly, most — if not all — sentences do not suffice, *per se*, to specify truth conditions or propositions. The enlargement consists in acknowledging the fact that such things as emotive meanings or connotations (e.g., the evaluation "immoral" attached to words such as 'murder', 'prostitute', etc.), frames (e.g., the frame "Human Life Cycle" in terms of which words such as 'bachelor', 'orphan', etc. are understood), expectations (e.g., those manifested by expressions such as 'even', 'already', etc.), and so on, are standardly associated with certain expressions, and therefore deserve to be included in a description of their literal meaning, in so far as they are systematically evoked in the uses of such expressions.

Context has its share in moderate literalism in a double capacity. First, due to the incomplete nature of 'literal meaning', as described above, contextual information is essential to 'fill in the gaps' in order to yield an interpretation. For instance, a sentence containing a deictic expression (e.g., 'yesterday', 'there') cannot be said to have been properly processed and understood if we rest content with its literal meaning and do not attempt to determine, with the help of the context of utterance, the referent(s) of that expression. In terms of the triplet sentence-, utterance-, and speaker's-meaning (which I consider essential to employ), context in its role of gap filler leads from sentence-meaning to utterance-meaning. The distinctive characteristic of the contextual search at this stage is that it is directly driven by indications (such as 'gaps') found in sentence-meaning. Utterance-meaning is, thus, the result of a necessary attempt to complete sentence-meaning. In this sense, it deserves to be viewed as the 'literal' — or, as I prefer to call it, the 'direct' — interpretation of the utterance. It may or may not fit the context as a whole, i.e., it may or may not correspond to the actual speaker's-meaning. When it comes to decide about this, contextual information is again necessary, either to confirm utterance-meaning as the proper interpretation, or else to provide alternatives. But now the context is searched not for gap fillers but rather for possible inconsistencies between the interpretation under consideration (which may be either the utterance-meaning or, in case this has already been rejected, a contextually suggested alternative) and contextual information. It is the difference in the ways in which the context is searched, rather than in the kinds of contextual information used, that allows for context to contribute (differently) both to expanding and completing sentence-meaning and selecting speaker's-meaning. This clarifies — I trust — Gibbs' doubts in this respect.

Moderate contextualism should consist in an analogous temperance of the claims made by contextualism. Ideally it should coincide with moderate literalism, except perhaps for an insistence in claiming that the comprehension process is more driven by context than by literal meaning (which might then function just as a verification device). At times, Gibbs is close to moderate contextualism, e.g., when he talks of the conventionalized meanings of indirect requests, for whose rather rapid understanding typical contexts of use are necessary (Gibbs 1983; 1986a). Both notions, convention and typicality, refer in fact to different aspects of our broadened notion of literal meaning. For the most part, however, Gibbs leans towards a more radical version of contextualism, which denies the existence of a "putative semantics of the

sentence in a null context" (1986b: 14) and places all the burden of interpretation on the context, "from the first moment" (ibid.).

Reaction time, parallel processing, and the subtlety of literal meaning effects

As repeatedly stressed by Gibbs, the time parameter is crucial in a debate that centers around processes. All his experimental evidence consists in data about reaction times (RTs) for comprehension of literal and non-literal sentences, with or without context. The average RTs reported by him, as well as by others whose support he seeks (e.g., Ortony et al. 1978), are of the order of two seconds for comprehension and an additional two seconds for paraphrase judgments. No data are supplied about what happens in the course of this very long (processually speaking) span of time. And yet, conclusions are drawn about what has putatively happened "from the first moment".

Fortunately, there are some data about what is going on during comprehension, if not in the first moment, at least very close to it (e.g., Swinney 1979; Marslen-Wilson and Tyler 1981; Marslen-Wilson 1984; 1985). What these data clearly show is that: (a) at first all lexical meanings of a word are activated, regardless of the presence of a biasing context which favors only some of them; (b) this activation occurs even prior to the complete perception of the stimulus word; and (c) contextual pressure for selection of an 'appropriate' meaning also operates very quickly, with the result that the inappropriate meanings are inhibited a few hundred milliseconds after their onset. The picture of language comprehension that emerges is that of a bottom-up, automatic, context-independent initial access to lexical meanings, followed very quickly by its assessment in the light of top-down contextual information, presumably performed along parallel lines of processing. The specific models proposed to account for these facts differ *en détail*, but they converge *en gros* (in addition to those mentioned above, see also Forster 1981 and Kintsch 1988).

Unfortunately, the data just mentioned refer only to lexical meanings. Obviously, these are important components of sentence-meaning, and their unmistakable context-independent activation directly supports some of the contentions of moderate literalism. Indirectly, it also suggests an explanation for Gibbs' and others' findings concerning the lack of significant global RT differences in understanding literal and non-literal meanings of utterances in

context. Just as a word is (tentatively) recognized and its lexical meanings are activated before its full sensory input is processed, so too a sentence is (tentatively) processed before its complete uptake. Such a processing includes, very early, contextual selection pressures. In this sense, the processing of sentence-, utterance-, and speaker's-meaning runs in parallel, being eventually completed almost simultaneously. Once the system settles for a speaker's-meaning, the sentence- and utterance-meaning that were instrumental in the process of interpretation are rapidly inhibited (though there is reason to believe it remains stored for a while in a "shallow" memory), especially if the speaker's-meaning turns out to be non-literal. This is why they are less easily accessible than the speaker's meaning after understanding is achieved. Clear-cut contextual bias can even shorten the processing time, by allowing an earlier choice of a single interpretation, which is what the subjects' pressing of the bar for "understood" indicates.

But none of this proves that the direct or literal meaning was not processed at all, nor that the whole process is not driven by or "kept on track" — to use Paivio's (1979: 170) apt term — by the activated literal meaning(s). Does this imply that the hypothesized role of literal meaning is "so subtle as to be undetectable", as claimed by Gibbs (1989: 248)? Certainly not. It only means that more sensitive experiments should be designed to tap what kinds of meaning, in addition to the lexical ones, are activated *in the course of* the process of utterance interpretation, rather than immediately *after* its completion.

Recoverability and contextless interpretation

Even what occurs immediately after the process of utterance interpretation may eventually serve as evidence for the early presence of literal meaning in the course of the process. The kind of evidence I have in mind has to do with the easiness and rapidity of the recovery of latent, especially literal, meanings. This phenomenon has been documented for indirect requests (Blum-Kulka 1989), for repairs (Fox 1987), and I believe it can also be found in the understanding of jokes, metaphors, irony, and other forms of indirectness as well (see Chapter 26a).

Gibbs (1989) dismisses this kind of evidence on the grounds that the seemingly *recovered* meaning is no less *constructed* than the meaning it comes

to replace. Accordingly, the former cannot be said to be 'primary' vis-à-vis the latter, and, *a fortiori*, it doesn't deserve the title 'literal'. Gibbs's stark opposition to the idea of recovery (naturally suggested by the uncontested rapidity of the process) is essential to sustain his contextualism. For, were that idea accepted, he should abandon the view that every interpretation is entirely context-driven (a view which lies at the heart of contextualism).

In fact, the problem arises in a sharper form in the case of understanding utterances in what experimenters call a "no-context" situation. In these cases, utterances are understood, and — what a coincidence! — it is their literal or direct interpretations that subjects tend to choose. Gibbs's strategy in dealing with these cases consists in assuming that even here "context" is at work, though "perhaps [a] so widely shared [one] that there seems to be no context at all" (246). Isn't this making context an entity "so subtle as to be undetectable" (248), just for the sake of preserving the contextualist dogma? Moderate literalism, by contrast, deals with such cases by claiming that those "widely shared contexts", effortlessly evoked by the use of a sentence in any non-special context, are part and parcel of the frames, scripts or schemata standardly associated with these forms of words, and hence belong to their 'literal meaning', within the perspective of the 'enlarged semantics' characteristic of moderate literalism (see Chapter 1).

This is also what explains quick recoverability. Consider the case of jokes. According to Gibbs, their humor lies not in the text itself but in the (mis)interpretations of the speakers' intentions. But, as a reader of the joke, all you have to go by is the text. In fact, jokes are linguistically framed as separate from the ongoing life concerns. They present themselves as self-sufficient, encapsulated episodes. No doubt they tap our 'knowledge base' and our prejudices. But such a tapping, as well as whatever (mis)interpretations the reader goes through in understanding the joke, must be induced by the text. And the fact that very different people do understand jokes and laugh at them indicates that the text reliably induces the interpretation. Now, the main point is that the text is such that, up to a point (say, up to the punch line), it unequivocally privileges one interpretation. If the other, unfavored one, can nevertheless be quickly recovered at the end, this shows that it must have been activated earlier, and remained available (in "shallow" memory), in spite of contextual pressure against it. Furthermore, at least in very brief jokes, the only piece of context that induces this interpretation is the punch line itself, so that its early activation cannot have been context-driven. In this respect, brief

jokes are equivalent to Ortony et al.'s (1978) "short context" condition, or, more generally, to a "no-context" condition. As I have shown (see Chapters 16 and 26a), a plausible source for such an early activation is, in many jokes, the literal meaning of some utterance or key expression, which is automatically accessed but contextually inhibited, much as — as demonstrated by Swinney's (1979) experiments — the idea of "river" is activated even when the context clearly favors the other reading of the word "bank".

Recoverability — and its immediate recognition — is also essential for indirectness to fulfill some of its functions, e.g., permitting a possible line of retreat (cf. Weizman 1989: 94). The speaker who uses indirectness counts on the listener's ability to recognize, from the outset, this possibility, usually afforded by the literal reading of the utterance. I wonder how Gibbs, who offers an elaborate account of how speakers carefully plan their indirect requests in order to meet anticipated potential obstacles for compliance (Gibbs 1986a; for a different view of what is maximized in indirect requests, see Blum-Kulka 1987), seems to assume that listeners, when understanding such utterances, need not immediately process, in order to be able to recognize and eventually recover, the alternatives underlying all such planning. People not only identify the content of a metaphorical or sarcastic remark. They also identify it immediately *qua* metaphorical or sarcastic, i.e., as contrasting with a possible (or impossible) literal reading. A theory that views this identification as a *post factum* judgment and the alternative reading as a late product, separated from the main understanding process, is not only not parsimonious; it is unable to explain the special communicative efficacy of indirectness in general, which lies precisely in its immediately recognizable ambivalence.

Communicating or guessing?

There is much more to be said, in the present dispute, about conflicting interpretations of experimental results, diverging uses of key terms such as 'context' and 'literal', and other specific matters. But I want to conclude by speculating about the perhaps deeper divergences that are at stake. They lie — so it seems — in our different conceptions of what is distinctive of linguistic communication. According to the contextualist view, context so powerfully constrains interpretation *in advance*, that the actual speech stimulus is largely

redundant. Once in interaction, we are constantly guessing what the other will do or say, so that what is actually said or done is interpreted in the light of such guesses, regardless of what its actual content may be.

According to the moderate literalism view, we do indeed try to predict what may come at the next stage of the interaction, but what actually comes may or may not fit our prediction. This is only possible because the linguistic sign has some 'autonomous' power of its own, bestowed upon it by sedimented conventions and habits, by virtue of which it can trigger, redirect, and guide the interpretive process. Semiotically speaking, the received signal or stimulus is always a sign-in-context. But it is the special stability and salience of the linguistic (or other semiotic) sign, in the midst of the ever flowing context, that lets us convey and understand fairly precise messages, exploiting to our benefit the otherwise bewildering richness — not poverty! — of contextual stimuli.

On both views, the aim of understanding is to recognize speakers' intentions. From the contextualist point of view, this is achieved in a sort of direct way, i.e., without the intermediary of conventionalized meanings. It is as if each time an expression is used one has to guess from context alone what it may possibly mean. From that standpoint the success and precision of linguistic communication is nearly miraculous. On the moderate literalism view, previously crystallized communicative intentions, available through linguistic conventions, are the usually — though not invariably — reliable mediators of such a mundane, and yet always remarkable feat.

Notes

1. This possibility takes care, among other things, of the objection raised by Allwood (1981) against the view that the literal meaning of a sentence is that which is common to all contexts of use.

2. For the notion of semantic relevance here employed see Achinstein (1968).

3. According to Grice, an implication conveyed by an utterance is cancelable in the sense that it can be denied without contradiction. Hence, for him, it does not belong to the "meaning" of the sentence uttered. For example, one can say: "They had many children and got married, but not in that order". The temporal order is only *suggested* or 'implicated' by the order of the conjuncts.

4. The rather subtle nature of this control or guiding role may well be responsible for some of the empirical difficulties in detecting the "presence" of literal meaning in certain experimental studies.

5. This proposal overlaps in some respects with that of Clark and Carlson (1981).

6. To this, Freud adds a third, deeper level, of which neither the joke-teller nor the addressee must be aware. This is the level of the "hidden" or "unconscious" motives of the joke, which are casually responsible — according to Freud — for the release of psychic energy characteristic of the burst of laughter. But this level, being detectable only by the psychoanalyst, need not concern us here (see Chapter 9).

7. I have argued that it must be "located" in his or her "horizon of attention" or in his or her "shallow memory" (see Chapter 16; see also Chapters 8a and 10).

8. I am grateful to Varda Dascal and Oded Levy for sharing with me their experiences, information, bibliography and time, in order to explore the fascinating issue of literal meaning in hypnosis.

9. In this, by the way, they could be simply said to be willing to comply with the hypnotist's request — a phenomenon well documented by other experimenters.

10. This may be related to Hilgard's suggestion, following Miller, Galanter, and Pribram (1960), that the hypnotist, through assuming control of verbalization, controls also the subjects' "talking to oneself", which has what Luria calls a "regulative function" in directing behavior.

Chapter 27

Pragmatics and foundationalism

My discussion of Bickhard and Campbell's "Some foundational questions concerning language studies" will be, as their paper is, programmatic and succinct. I will focus on what I take to be the reason why the editors of the *Journal of Pragmatics* decided to devote a special issue to this paper, namely the authors' argument to the effect that a 'functional, pragmatic, or interactive' conception of representation, meaning, and linguistic structures must be adopted as a unified foundation for epistemology, cognitive science, and language studies. In order to focus on the essentials of this argument, other valuable aspects of the authors' work will not be commented upon here.

Let me say, from the outset, that I share much of Bickhard and Campbell's concern about the inadequacy of traditional forms of representationalism (cf. Dascal 1989b) as well as their emphasis on the thorough 'pragmaticity' and 'context-dependence' of language and cognition (see Chapter 18; cf. Dascal 1983). Where I diverge from them is in the conclusion they draw from this, namely, the attribution of a 'foundational' role to pragmatics.

Bickhard and Campbell's argument proceeds as follows. First, they argue that if all representations were 'encodings' (i.e., substitutional, translational, or 'stand-in' relations), then it would be impossible to explain how they acquire or possess content. The reason is that the basic formula for assigning content to an encoding is "'*X*' represents the same thing as '*Y*', for epistemic agent *A*", which can only succeed in assigning content if agent *A* already *knows* what '*Y*' represents. Hence, there must be some other, more fundamental form of representation, where content arises without presupposing that it is already explicitly represented or known. For Bickhard and Campbell, such a form is 'intrinsically functional in nature'. The content of such representations is an emergent property they acquire by virtue of their role in providing a goal-directed, hierarchically organized system with a set of informational selections that increases the likelihood of the system to reach its goal. Such a system interacts with the environment. The results of any such interaction include 'internal outcomes', which depend on the system as

well as on the environment. An internal outcome, then, 'picks out a set of environmental conditions that would yield it', i.e., a set of 'interactive properties' of the environment it 'indicates'. In this sense, the internal outcome 'defines a set of environmental states' to which it 'corresponds', thereby acquiring 'representational content'. But, since such definitions are essentially *implicit,* they do not involve or require the system's 'knowledge' of *what* is represented. Knowledge only arises through the *uses* other parts of the system can make of such outcomes, i.e., of their actual control value in the flow of the system's interactions.

The next step in the argument consists in the claim that, given this conception of representation and knowledge, 'language cannot be an encoding of mental contents' and that utterances must be viewed as *operations* that change or transform knowledge structures (or socially shared representations) rather than encoding them. This, in turn, implies a radical inversion of the traditional roles of semantics and pragmatics: "…the supposedly semantic issues of representations with truth values become part of the supposedly pragmatic issues of outcomes and usages of utterances, while the supposedly pragmatic issues of the social operative use of language become part of the supposedly semantic issues of the operative power — the meaning — of sentences" (Bickhard and Campbell 1992:411). Pragmatics, in this view, is thus strongly foundational, for "it is not only a matter of the use of language, … but functional social operativity is the fundamental *nature* of language and, therefore, of language meaning *and* language structure" (430).

This line of argumentation raises a number of problems, both in the content of each of its steps and in their connection. Notice, first, that neither the critique of 'encodingism' nor the appeal to interactionism is new. Representationalism has come under sharp criticism in epistemology (Rorty 1979), in the design of computer systems (Winograd and Flores 1987), and in many other fields; and, even though defenders of the 'representational theory of the mind' still contend that it is 'the only game in town' in cognitive science, at least since the advent of the connectionist paradigm this is no longer true. As for grounding meaning in social interaction, this has been, in one way or another, the main purpose of Malinowski, Mead, Wittgenstein, British Functionalism, Dialogical Logic, to mention only some representative names of this tendency which come easily to mind.

What is new in Bickhard and Campbell's proposals is the elements they select from their predecessors and the way they put them together to form a

comprehensive view of mind and language. Consider, for example, the differences between Bickhard and Campbell's critique of representationalism and, say, Rorty's. It is clearly not as radical as Rorty's, in so far as it does not espouse either the latter's anti-foundationalism or a complete demise of all forms of representations. Whereas Rorty's anti-foundationalism amounts to a rejection of all kinds of essentialism, Bickhard and Campbell's paper abounds in claims about the true nature or the essence of representation, language, cognition, etc.; whereas Rorty's pragmatism is 'without foundations' (to use Margolis' phrase) and is not intended to *replace* representationalism by other foundations, Bickhard and Campbell's brand of pragmatism purports to replace encodingism by a new theory — interactionism — that reveals the true groundings of content, meaning, and knowledge; whereas Rorty suggests a Wittgensteinian plurality of language-games with no common denominator, Bickhard and Campbell seek a *unjfied* theory of language and mind; whereas Rorty points out that an account of how meanings originate does not entail an account of their validity, objectivity, or functioning (either in thought or in discourse), Bickhard and Campbell assume it does. These differences illustrate quite well some of the difficulties I detect in Bickhard and Campbell's argument, and deserve, therefore, further elaboration.

Suppose Bickhard and Campbell are correct in their critique of encodingism. What this critique shows is that a theory of representations *qua* encodings is not self-sufficient. It needs a further theory that accounts for how at least *some* representational contents arise *in the first place,* in a non-encoding way. It does not show — and Bickhard and Campbell do not claim it does — that *no* representations are encodings. But then, it may well be that, though encodings are admittedly 'derivative' representations, they form *as a matter of fact* the vast majority of the representations we use. Their ultimate endowment with 'real semantic value' will, to be sure, depend upon the ability to cash them out by tracing them back to non-derivative representations. But such a cashing out may well be something we do less often than one might think. In fact, there is evidence that much of our reasoning consists in 'manipulating symbols', i.e., in replacing encodings (e.g., words) by other encodings (e.g., their definitions), much in the way Hobbes thought reasoning is nothing but 'reckoning with words'. Leibniz, for one, suggested that such a 'circulation' of symbols in thought, which he called (not pejoratively) 'blind thought', is the only way we have to think about relatively complex matters, just as complex financial operations rarely use cash or gold, though the possibility of a hypo-

thetical exchange for gold remains the remote foundation that ensures the 'value' of those transactions (cf. Dascal 1987b: Chapter 1). In this sense, encodings, though not foundational, may well be the most typical form of representation we use, while non-derivative representations, though foundational, are rarely appealed to. Pragmatism may thus be right in stressing that the *ultimate* source of the meaning or content of a representation lies in its practical consequences, and wrong in assuming that every time we use a representation we relate it, implicitly or explicitly, to that source. Thus, meanings defined as relationships between encodings may acquire a measure of autonomy as units of mental functioning vis-à-vis their alleged functional underpinnings, so that a theory of mental functioning does not reduce to a functional theory in Bickhard and Campbell's sense. At any rate, such a theory cannot take the functional account of acquisition of content as characteristic or paradigmatic of the way in which content is actually present in mental processes. Furthermore, it cannot ignore the relative autonomy — vis-à-vis their ultimate functional value — that contents display.

The upshot of these considerations is twofold. First, whereas the interactive, pragmatist, or functional story may be correct regarding how content ultimately arises, this does not entail that it is also correct as an account of how content is actually displayed — i.e., stored, retrieved, or otherwise manipulated by the mind; in other words, pragmatism per se does not yield pragmatics, i.e., a theory of how we actually use representations. Second, in particular, the pragmatist account, if true, does not preclude or obviate the need for an account of the relative autonomy of meanings — i.e., for a semantics not necessarily couched in terms of the ultimate functional values of representations.

In fact, to comment now briefly on the second step in Bickhard and Campbell's argument, thoroughly functionalist accounts of content run into well-known difficulties, such as those pointed out by Fodor's (1987) critique of meaning holism and conceptual or functional role theories. In particular, it remains to be seen whether Bickhard and Campbell's version of such a theory (only sketched in the paper under discussion), where content is claimed to emerge somehow from non-intentional informational and control relationships, can overcome the difficulties that plague other similar theories, such as Dretske's (1981b, 1988).

Turning now to the third step in the argument, Bickhard and Campbell draw the conclusion that 'language cannot be an encoding of mental contents'

from two independent assumptions: (a) 'it is impossible to cross epistemic boundaries with new foundational encodings', and (b) 'interactive control structures do not correspond structurally from one person to another in the manner that such encodings would require'. I confess that I have some difficulty in understanding the notions employed in these premises. Let me try. I take the ban on 'crossing epistemic boundaries' to mean that an encoding is always a relation between two representations, and never a relation between a representation and something which is not one. That no *new foundational* encodings are possible means, then, that through encodings, one can never step outside the realm of representations. Now, if this prevents linguistic representation from being encodings of mental representations, then Bickhard and Campbell are clearly assuming that the mental and the linguistic are separated by an 'epistemic boundary'. I wish I knew more about Bickhard and Campbell's conception of epistemic realms, so that I would be able to assess what kind of metaphysical assumption underlies such a separation. *Prima facie*, the separation cannot be too deep, since (i) linguistic representations can *operate* on mental representations; (ii) an account of linguistic representations must be given in a way that is strictly analogous to the account of mental representations, namely, it must be interactive/functional; and (iii) Bickhard and Campbell profess strict allegiance to materialism. At any rate, whatever its depth, the separation prevents linguistic representations from being encodings, on Bickhard and Campbell's own terms, only if it is required that they be *new* and *foundational*. If this requirement is dropped, however, linguistic representations could perfectly well be viewed as *derivative* encodings of mental contents — which is in fact the contention of those who view linguistic intentionality as derived from mental intentionality (cf. Chisholm 1977). Unless, of course, epistemic domains are conceived as 'closed' in such a way that transducers (which is what encodings are, in Bickhard and Campbell's view) can only act *within* a domain. This would mean, for instance, either that, say, acoustic representations are not convertible into visual representations or else that, if they are, they belong to the same epistemic domain. Since they are clearly convertible, it follows that they belong to the same domain. But if this is so, then, unless there is here some hidden metaphysics, I do not see why linguistic and mental representations cannot belong to the same domain too, and hence why the former cannot be encodings of the latter.

The second premise, as far as I can understand it, brings us closer to a point raised above. It contends that a requirement for encodings to operate is

some sort of inter-subjective structural convergence, i.e., some sort of stability. Translated into the terms of my argument above, this amounts to requiring a certain autonomy of meaning, which a strictly functional account cannot ensure. But, as I have argued, many of our mental representations indeed display such an autonomy, precisely because they function as rule-based encodings, rather than as functional representations. Premise (b) would prevent linguistic representations from being encodings of mental representations only on the assumption that all mental representations are of the latter kind. But if many *mental* representations are in fact derivative encodings, enjoying the required stability of meaning, why couldn't *linguistic* representations be encodings as well?

Finally, I have no particular qualm with the account of utterances as interactive operations, for utterances are clearly actions in which linguistic representations (e.g., words, sentences) are *used.* They are used, first and foremost, to induce changes in an addressee's mental representations. In the long run, in so far as 'situation conventions' are socially shared representations, utterances surely modify them too. Yet, in the short run, they rather *rely on* the relative stability and 'givenness' of such situation conventions. Semantics, to my mind, is the account of such relatively stable conventions. From a genetic point of view, such conventions in all likelihood stem from utterances performed in what Blackburn (1984: 113) aptly calls a 'one off' situation, i.e., a situation where no established or stable shared communication conventions are available. So, in this sense, interaction (or 'pragmatics') is indeed foundational for semantics. But once such conventions become 'fossilized' or 'crystallized', the workings of the communication process change substantially, for utterers not only *can* now rely on them in order to 'operate' on their audiences' mental representations; they also *must* do so, for such stable meanings are now givens of the communicative situation that cannot be ignored if the participants wish to achieve their communicative goals. In such a context, therefore, pragmatics (i.e., interaction) can only function provided it takes semantics into account. Whether this means that, at this point, semantics becomes 'foundational' and pragmatics 'derivative' is — as Bickhard and Campbell say in another context — a matter of convention.

Chapter 28

The marriage of pragmatics and rhetoric

The current proliferation of hermeneutic resources with a linguistic base — pragmatics, speech act theory, classical rhetorical theory, Burkean analysis, conversational analysis, Habermasian communicative action — is an *embarras de richesse*. Surely, at this point, we need, not another theory, but rather an attempt at synthesis, an attempt to turn this hermeneutic plenitude into a single theory. In this paper, we propose to take an initial step in this direction, to attempt to marry pragmatics and rhetoric. But given the theoretical exfoliation that has marked both these areas, such a marriage can be managed only by imposing very strict limitations on the scope of our enterprise. We believe, however, that we can take a step in our preferred direction by addressing the more specific problem of whether the theory of Paul Grice, the father of pragmatics, is compatible with the theory of Aristotle, the father of rhetoric. We intend to do so by reconstructing Aristotelian rhetoric as a pragmatics.

This means that we must reconstruct rhetoric as a cognitive theory, one that has inference at its center. As regards the canon of invention and the logos at its heart, this move seems natural; as regards "proofs" from emotion and character, and the canons of style and arrangement, the same move seems counterintuitive. There is another problem as well: Gricean talk exchanges rule out misdirection, and a rhetorical theory that cannot account for misdirection will lack plausibility. Finally, though Grice's theory concerns only a single speaker and hearer, we mean our reconstruction to apply as well to public speaking and to reading. Where differences are material to that reconstruction, as between hearers and audiences, we will take note of them.

A cognitive theory of rhetoric must acknowledge a debt, not only to Aristotle, but also to Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca's *The New Rhetoric*, in our view the finest modern attempt to reconstruct Aristotle's *Rhetoric*. *The New Rhetoric* integrates into a cognitive, inference-based theory, not only the inventive material of the first two books, but also much that Aristotle has to say about style and arrangement in Book III. But as its subtitle, *A Treatise on Argumentation*, hints, its treatment of his proofs from character

is deficient, and its treatment of emotional proofs virtually non-existent. We think that this imbalance must be corrected. Thanks to classicist William Fortenbaugh and philosopher William Lyons, we think that it can be. Both see Aristotle's theory of the emotions as cognitive, one in which inference is necessarily involved. (The reconstruction of the unity of Aristotle's rhetoric along these lines is further developed in Gross and Dascal 2001.)

We believe that our redescription of classical rhetoric in terms of Gricean pragmatics will benefit both pragmatics and rhetoric. Rhetoric will benefit from the realization that its practices are not a jumble of techniques, but are, instead, a coherent theory in the cognitive class; rhetorical theory will thus be seen as a genuine hermeneutics, one that, contrary to the received view, includes the subject matter of the whole of Aristotle's masterpiece. Rhetorical theory will also benefit because it can be continually strengthened by developments in pragmatic theory, in cognitive theory, and in cognitive psychology. In its turn, pragmatics will benefit from a broadening of its explanatory reach routinely to include talk exchanges whose purpose is persuasive rather than just informative, and a widening of its explanatory scope routinely to include the explanation of stylistic and organizational aspects of talk exchanges, as well as aspects related to the emotions and character of speakers.

Classical rhetoric and Gricean pragmatics

According to Grice's Cooperative Principle (CP), "each participant recognizes in [talk exchanges], to some extent, a common purpose, or set of purposes, or at least a mutually accepted direction" (1989: 26). In such talk exchanges, moreover, all that is said is said according to meaning$_{NN}$. Summarizing his views on meaning$_{NN}$, Grice says: "we may say that 'A meant$_{NN}$ something by *x*' is roughly equivalent to 'A uttered *x* with the intention of inducing a belief by means of the recognition of this intention'" (1989: 219). Grice's conversational maxims are the guiding principles of such talk exchanges, each of whose utterances is an instance of meaning$_{NN}$. In accord with the maxims, Speaker S and Hearer H are expected to make their comments truthful, relevant, as perspicuous as possible, and exactly as informative as required. In this theory of talk exchanges, understanding is a matter of inference from what is said to what is meant.

Because persuasion is a kind of communicative interaction, Gricean theory should easily extend to cover it. But between Gricean theory and persuasion, there are differences apparently significant enough to make a responsible incorporation impossible. Since it is a condition of persuasion that there may be a discrepancy between the goals of S and H, the Cooperative Principle cannot be necessary except in some minimal form. $\text{Meaning}_{\text{NN}}$ cannot be necessary either, since speakers may systematically mislead their audiences as to their intentions; indeed, persuasion may depend on the lack of recognition of such systematic misdirection. In addition, the conversational maxims cannot be said to apply, especially those relating to truthfulness (Quality) and perspicuousness (Manner), neither of which may be in the interest of S who may easily prefer only the *appearance* of truthfulness and perspicuousness. Furthermore, Gricean talk exchanges consist of networks of propositions linked by implication, implicature or presupposition. This has an unfortunate consequence for the description of persuasion, which often has as its goal or interim goal, not a proposition, but an alteration in emotional state or in the disposition to approve or disapprove of conduct or character. Finally, in persuasion S and H need not alternate roles; indeed, it is a condition of many persuasive exchanges that H is relatively passive and may not even be entitled to a "turn".

This last difference is only apparently a discrepancy. It is true that persuasive exchanges differ from Gricean exchanges in that they are not generally dialogical. But this is not an argument against continuous interchange between S and H; even in oratory, both S and H have roles that are active and continuous: S conveying meaning, H constructing meaning through inference. Moreover, when S fails to maintain CP, H will not be slow to indicate to S that the persuasive situation no longer pertains. As in dialogue, S and H are bound together as the co-constructors of the interchange.

Other discrepancies are an artifact of the paradigmatic case of talk exchanges on which Grice bases his system: the exchange of information. Rhetorical exchanges are another special case of such exchanges; they have a different purpose: persuasion. In persuasion, the initial agreement of H minimally to be open to influence is *in itself* an instance of the Cooperative Principle. The introductory remarks of S in the typical classical *exordium* or introduction —remarks designed to obtain the attention, interest, and trust of the audience — are meant to carry this process one step further: to establish a beachhead of CP as the foundation of continuing influence. In information

exchanges, cooperation is presupposed; in persuasive exchanges, it must be strengthened and maintained.

Moreover, in persuasive exchanges, Grice's definition of meaning$_{NN}$ needs to be altered from a general insistence on transparency of intent to a formulation that includes the possibility of misdirection and deception. To see how this might be managed, let us slightly alter one of Grice's examples: if S knows H is avaricious, and wants H to leave the room, S may be able to do so by throwing a $100 bill out the window. This is not an example of Grice's meaning$_{NN}$: the success of S's "utterance" depends on H's ignorance of S's intention. In order to make these exchanges Gricean, therefore, we must recognize second-order intentions. As Schiffer puts it, in one of his many formulations designed to circumvent the difficulties raised by the counterexamples of Strawson, Searle and others, difficulties that rely precisely on deception:

> it is worth noting that, should it be desirable, the definitions of 'S meant that *p*' and 'S meant that A was to Ψ′ may easily be altered to accommodate both the primary cases and the "counter-suggestive" cases: we simply require only that S utter *x* intending A to *think S* uttered *x* with those intentions specified in the definitions (Schiffer 1972:72).

In Grice's example, S wants to get H out of the room by means of H's *not* understanding S's intention to do so. So S utters *x* with the intention of inducing a false belief as to his true intention.

Although proposals like Schiffer's to amend Grice's definition of meaning$_{NN}$ are not problem-free, they point the way towards what we need in our reconstruction. What is important from our point of view is that, although the intentions inferred in deceptive communication are erroneous, they are still inferences that S intends H to make as a result of recognizing S's first-order intention. This means that communicative causality still fully applies, that is, H's belief is *caused* by what S says and by his inference from that utterance to its intention.

This modified definition means that the conversational maxim enjoining truthfulness applies to rhetorical exchanges only as an injunction that its *appearance* must be maintained. Persuasive exchanges also differ from informational exchanges in that the conversational maxim enjoining perspicuousness may not apply. Persuasion may depend on the systematic employment of vagueness (in which it is not clear what is meant) and ambiguity (in which

more than one thing is meant). An expression such as "abortion permitted due to medical emergency" is intentionally vague if S has avoided specification of "medical emergency" in the interests of persuasion. If, on the other hand, S intends that one H understand medical emergency as life threatening only, and another as including the emotional state of the mother-to-be, then the expression is intentionally ambiguous. Of course, S must not convey the intent to be unclear; to do so would be fatal to persuasion. To the extent that vague and ambiguous exchanges are misleading, they conform to the revision of Grice's meaning_{NN} that includes higher-order intentions.

None of these alterations in Grice's principles is, we think, fatal to the alliance between rhetorical theory and pragmatics. These alterations merely bring us one step closer to reaching pragmatic principles of perfect generality. In Grice's words: "I have stated my maxims as if [the purpose of talk exchanges was] a maximally effective exchange of information; this specification is, of course, too narrow, and the scheme needs to be generalized to allow for such general purposes as influencing or directing the actions of others" (1989: 28).

But there are two discrepancies between informational and persuasive exchanges that are not so easily dealt with. The goal of Gricean information exchanges is always propositional. But persuasion often has as its goal or interim goal an alteration in an emotional state, or a mobilization of a value. It is not immediately obvious, however, that Grice's notion of inference can be applied to so-called emotional "proofs" and "proofs" from character; surely, "proof" applied to emotion and character is a metaphoric extension that obscures more than it explains. But we shall show that while beliefs in the form of propositions are never sufficient to account for our emotional states and our judgments of character, they are necessary. Thus, cognition is an essential part of such states and such judgments.

There is an additional problem. Although we can see how inference can apply to the canon of invention, it is difficult to see how it can apply to the canons of style and arrangement. Style — the systematic variation among syntactic and semantic choices — seems entirely divorced from the operation of reason in two senses: stylistic variations can apparently be apprehended without its aid and stylistic choices are apparently unconnected with the conduct of arguments. But we shall show that the bridge between the Gricean approach and Aristotelian notions of style is easier to build than it may seem.

In the first place, in both Aristotle and Grice, stylistic devices involve inference for their comprehension; in Grice, in fact, they generate conversational implicatures by flouting the maxims. For example, a particularly convoluted style can be seen as a violation of Grice's maxim of Manner, a prompt to H to infer from this stylistic choice an intent on the part of S. Moreover, as Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca point out, in persuasive discourse, style often has a persuasive, as distinct from an aesthetic, purpose.

Arrangement — the organization of a speech — may seem equally remote from the inferential process, which apparently functions only within arguments. But we shall show that speakers who follow the conventions of well-established genres — those of the classical oration or the experimental paper, for example — encourage audiences legitimately to infer their acceptability as members of a social or scientific community: an argument from *êthos*. In addition, because all persuasive genres simultaneously embody the two orders of argument that underlie any argument — the logical/chronological and the psychological — a speech can gain in persuasive strength by moving by degrees from the consensual to the contentious and, in public address at least, from emotional neutrality to impassioned advocacy. Finally, since, as a general rule, well-entrenched genres uniformly obey Grice's maxim of Manner to be orderly, it is possible for speakers to flout this maxim, and by so doing to create implicatures in the interest of dramatizing their larger persuasive purposes.

We believe that an alliance between rhetoric and pragmatics will be possible if these problems are solved: we must be able to reconstruct classical rhetoric as a cognitive theory, one in which inference plays a central role, not only in invention and in *logos*, as we would expect, but also in *êthos*, *pathos*, *lexis* (or style) and *taxis* (or arrangement).

A cognitive theory of rhetoric: Presuppositions

The theory we reconstruct has as its center an S intending to persuade, that is, intending to reinforce or change the beliefs, attitudes, or actions of H. On this construal, just telling a joke is not a rhetorical transaction, nor is just saying hello to an acquaintance in the mall. But if I am telling a joke *in order to* induce friendly feelings, if I refrain from saying hello *in order to* convey an insult, then I am engaged in a rhetorical transaction, attempting to persuade you to alter

beliefs, attitudes, or actions as a consequence of your recognition of my intent to do so.

The theory we reconstruct assumes communicative causality, that is, it assumes that any effect on H is a consequence of what S says or signals with communicative intent. The cut is not between action and words, since words need not be uttered with communicative intent: the aphasic's word salad is not communication, but a symptom of disease. Actions without words can also have a communicative intent: the angry S shaking his fist as an answer to a proposal is signaling with communicative intent. But the communicative intent of words or actions is not enough; S must intend to persuade *by virtue of* just those words or actions. By shaking his fist, the angry S must intend to persuade H that he is angry about the proposal and H must be persuaded of that anger by virtue of recognizing the meaning of the gesture as an index of that intent.

Furthermore, the theory we reconstruct has the utterance-in-context as its fundamental building block. It emphasizes, on the one hand, the structural elements of the utterance and, on the other, its orientation towards an 'immediate' interaction between a speaker and an audience. Persuasive utterances are always utterances-in-context, that is, the specification of their 'meaning' always involves the specification of a forum, an exigence, a syntax, a semantics (sense and reference) and an 'illocutionary force'. Promises, assertions, greetings, and questions are terms that describe such illocutionary forces. If I say 'The sun is shining', in normal circumstances I am engaged in the illocutionary act of asserting the truth of the proposition "The sun is shining". I might also have said, 'Old Sol is shining'. The latter sentence would be referentially synonymous with the first, but would differ from it in sense; that is, I would not know these sentences to be referentially synonymous unless I knew the sun under the description 'Old Sol'. If H understands either assertion as a consequence of understanding S's intent as embodied in S's utterance, then H has illocutionary uptake; if H believes the assertion to be true (let us say, as an answer to a question), then the utterance has achieved its intended perlocutionary force.

An utterance is always embedded in a particular context without which its meaning will be indeterminate. Austin puts this well when he says that the *complete* understanding of our speech acts depends on our apprehension of their *total* context: "we must consider the total situation in which the utterance is issued — the total speech act" (1962: 52). Of course this is an unattain-

able ideal, and in practice we must always be satisfied with less than full context and therefore less than full determinativeness.

Persuasive utterances have as their indispensable contextual components a forum, an exigence, a speaker and an audience. A forum is a public space designed to provide opportunities to speak for those who have the right to exercise those opportunities. To Aristotle, there are three forums: the law-courts, the legislature, and public occasions for celebration, commemoration, or calumniation, the loci, respectively, of forensic, deliberative, and epideictic oratory. These forums constrain and channel inference: forensic oratory deals with the past, deliberative with the future, epideictic with the expression of community values. Each forum also has its preferred mode of reasoning. Deliberative oratory prefers induction from past examples to possible futures; in contrast, forensic oratory, with its necessary focus on the past, prefers deduction (Rhetoric 2.20.9). With its focus on values, epideictic prefers *auxesis* or amplification as its form of argument (1.9.39); amplification is a form of induction that moves from a generalization to its examples, from the fact of courage to instances of courage.

In all oratory, there is a process prior to any inference. Speakers must determine the issues that are at stake, the *staseis*. These are adumbrated by Aristotle (1.13.9-10, 3.16.4, 17.1), but are most useful to us in the final form they took in later forensic rhetoric: speakers asked whether an act was committed (*an sit*); whether it was a crime (*quid sit*); whether the crime was justified in some way (*quale sit*). Although no persuasive communication is possible without presupposing the issue at stake, the issue at stake can also *be* the issue at stake. This shift corresponds precisely to Habermas's distinction between communication and discourse; in discourse, "the subject of discursive examination is not the rightness claim directly connected with the speech act, but the validity claim of the underlying norm" (1979: 64).

Contenders in polemical exchanges know that the definition of "the issue at stake" is a decisive step in argument, because such a definition establishes the presumptions or "inference tickets" that allocate the "burden of proof" among the participants. Consequently, polemicists typically engage in a bitter dispute concerning precisely what is at stake, each side making persuasive efforts to bring "preliminary" or "procedural" issues to the foreground, hoping thereby to shift the burden of proof in their favor.

The existence of an appropriate forum and of my right to employ it are not sufficient for public speech. I need not exercise that right; I will not, in fact,

exercise it if I perceive no motive for speaking, no exigence. (Equally, I can experience an exigence but lack a forum for its expression, or the right to speak in that forum.) After the initial exigence, every intervention by one of the participants in a conversation or in a polemical exchange sets up a rhetorical exigence that the following participant must satisfy (cf. Chapter 2 for the corresponding notion of 'conversational demand'). For example, a question demands a reply, an objection, a rebuttal (or a concession). Failure by participants to satisfy such exigencies may (legitimately) lead to inferences about their 'second' intentions.

Speaker and audience are two other indispensable contextual components of persuasive utterance; to describe this crucial pair adequately, we must go beyond the atomic S and H of Gricean analysis. Orators need not hearers, but audiences. We must not equate any aggregate of individual hearers with an audience. Although an audience is made up of individuals, each with its own disposition to be persuaded, no speaker can separately, specifically and simultaneously address hearers A, B, C, D, E ... and *n*. Necessarily, the audiences orators address are not actual, but ideal: they are creations of the speech. If at the end of a speech, the audience applauds, it is applause from an audience the orator has created, an audience that *did not exist* at the beginning of the speech. Even in the case of one-to-one persuasion, this principle applies: to be persuaded even a single hearer must be imagined and addressed as an audience; even in such cases audiences are the creations of speakers. For Aristotle, this principle is entailed by the nature of rhetoric as an art: "rhetoric [does not] theorize about each opinion — what may seem so to Socrates or Hippias — but about what seems true to people of a certain sort" (1.2.11). His analysis of audiences into the young, the middle-aged and the old exemplifies this principle (2.12-14).

We are indebted to Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca for a distinction between two sorts of audiences: universal and particular. This is *not* a distinction between the ideal and the real, but between two sorts of ideal. Both the universal audience and the particular audience are regulative ideals that constrain what speakers feel they can say, what arguments they feel they can make, what appeals they feel are appropriate. In the first case, the imagined audience is humankind in general; in the second, a subset of humankind: Americans or nuclear physicists or Republicans.

Analysts must also find a *via media* between the postmodern view, in which S is merely an instantiation of larger economic, social, and political

forces, and the traditional, Aristotelian view, in which S has a large measure of autonomy. We must do so because, on the traditional, Aristotelian view, rhetoric is an art whose components are wholly within S's control. If this is the case, every persuasive aspect of style, arrangement, and invention can be traced back, in principle, to decision and voluntary action. Challenged by the analyst, S can always respond that a particular feature of the text either was or could have been a consequence of choice. 'Could have been' may seem like an unacceptable hedge. But we mean by this only that speakers need not be conscious of all of their intentions at the time that they are speaking according to them. For example, when speakers answer the telephone by saying 'Hello', they do not mean to greet the caller; they are signaling their presence on the line. They may not be conscious of this intent at the time of utterance, but they would acknowledge that it was their intent if it were pointed out to them.

Analysts need also to recognize that components of a text may be outside the control of any particular S. Sometimes, a social group may decide that texts should have one format or another: the format of the scientific or scholarly paper may be the result. Here we may speak legitimately of collective group intent (see Chapter 5). If the conventions of scientific writing require an abstract, for example, we may legitimately say that the writing of any particular abstract is a consequence of the prior intent of a group to make the search for information more efficient. We may say this, despite the fact that the intent of S, actually writing the abstract, may be merely to comply with the dictates of the group in order to be published. In this way, the writing of an abstract is rhetorical from the point of view of the group, though not for the individual member, except in so far as that member is seen as a representative of the group. But sometimes social, political or economic pressures influence textual features in such a way that neither the group nor any of its members is conscious of this influence or of its effects. In scientific communication, for instance, there has been over the centuries a movement toward the simplification of the syntax of sentences; their length has been reduced slightly and the number of their clauses reduced significantly. Although these characteristics of the text may be seen as adaptations in the interest of communicative efficiency, they are not within the scope of communicative causality, and therefore cannot be part of a cognitive theory of rhetoric.

Rhetorical theory has traditionally concerned itself with efforts, rather than effects. This concern stems from Aristotle's definition of rhetoric as an art, the performance of which cannot be judged solely according to its effects.

In medicine, Aristotle's paradigm art, effects cannot be the sole criterion of good practice: the operation can succeed, though the patient dies. Although the distinction Aristotle draws is valid, a strict demarcation in rhetoric between communicative causes and their effects cannot be defended. The criteria for judging rhetorical performance must be grounded, not in efforts, but in actual effects: the normative *oughts* that concern best practice must have actual *ises* as their basis. A medicine that did not concern itself with the effects of treatment is unthinkable; why should a rhetoric be different? Of course, we must acknowledge that, while illocutionary intent may be inferred from individual texts, illocutionary as well as perlocutionary success are empirical issues that can be settled only by an analysis of audience reactions as expressed in adjoining text whose minimal unit corresponds to a 'turn' in conversational analysis. A response to an attack constitutes such a turn; so does a speaker's comment followed by audience applause. Given these considerations, we can extend a theory of cognitive rhetoric to include, not only illocutionary force, but illocutionary uptake and perlocutionary force as well.

A cognitive theory of rhetoric: Principles

In a cognitive theory of rhetoric, all audience reactions must be the products of inference.

This creates a problem with Aristotle's classification of the *pisteis* or proofs into *logos* or logical, êthos or characterological, and *pathos* or emotional. In one sense, *logos* applies only to "logical' matters, those whose conclusions are propositions; in another sense, *logos* is all-pervasive, applying not only to logical matters, but also to matters of emotion and character. Although this distinction within *logos* is not apparent in the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle elsewhere distinguishes between the two forms of inference by distinguishing between the demonstrative syllogism, whose conclusion is propositional, and the practical syllogism, whose conclusion is an action or emotion (Aristotle 1934: 7.3). The question is not one of subject matter:

> All people are angry at those who insult them
> The Spartans have insulted the Athenians
> Therefore, the Athenians are angry

This is a "logical" syllogism if the conclusion is a statement, a practical syllogism if it is a state of mind. To avoid confusion, in this paper we shall limit our use of *logos* to inferential processes whose conclusions are propositional.

But we must not assume that a distinction made for the purposes of analysis is a distinction that also exists *in situ*. The *logos* of actual arguments is never separable from their *êthos* and *pathos*, nor is the logical aspect of argument separable from its expressive and contextual aspects. In other words, we must adhere to the methodological dictum that, when we talk about argument, we must go beyond the *logos*; we must talk about emotional proofs and proofs from character; we must talk about style and arrangement.

Logos

Rhetorical reasoning may be enthymematic or paradigmatic, that is, proceeding by example. The following is a typical *enthymeme*: "[to show] that Dorieus has won a contest with a crown it is enough to have said that he has won the Olympic games, and there is no need to add that the Olympic games have a crown as the prize for everybody knows that" (1.2.13). In this case, the rhetorical syllogism is incomplete: only the minor premise is mentioned. But this means, not that all *enthymemata* are incomplete, but only that a complete iteration of premises and conclusion is not necessary to an enthymeme. A syllogism will be rhetorical even if it is complete so long as its premises are *endoxa* or common opinions. This does not even exclude genuine knowledge from the premises of rhetorical syllogisms so long as this knowledge is not genuinely held, but is merely believed; in Aristotle's terms, orators and their audiences know the *that* and not the *why*: that the earth is at the center of the universe can be the premise of a rhetorical syllogism so long as that proposition is simply believed and not held because the principle is known that heavy things are drawn to a center.

Complementing rhetorical deduction is rhetorical induction or paradigmatic reasoning from examples or signs. Induction from example takes two forms in Aristotle's rhetoric. Sometimes speakers enumerate two or three examples and then imply that their conclusion follows because it is another example of the same kind. Here is Aristotle's illustration: "[when someone claims] that Dionysus is plotting tyranny because he is seeking a bodyguard; for Peisistratus also, when plotting earlier, sought a guard and after receiving

it made himself a tyrant, and Theagenes [did the same] in Megara, and others, whom the audience knows of, all become examples of Dionysius, of whom they do not yet know whether he makes his demand for this reason " (1.2.19). In such cases, the rule is unmentioned. But it is also possible to argue from examples to a rule, "from part to whole" (1.2.19): "in the case of the woman of Peparethus [it was argued] that women everywhere discern the truth about [who is the father of children]; for when the orator Mantias at Athens was disputing [the parentage of] his son, the boy's mother declared the truth. Similarly, when Ismenias and Stilbon were in a dispute at Thebes, the woman of Dondona identified the son of Smenias; and for this reason Thettaliscus was recognized as Ismenias' son" (2.23.11).

Inferences from examples or from necessary and fallible signs are permissible starting points for rhetorical induction: "if someone were to state that since Socrates was wise and just, it is a fallible sign [or *semion*] that the wise are just", the sign would be only probable; on the other hand, "if someone were to state that there is a sign that someone is sick, for he has a fever, or that a woman has given birth, for she has milk, that is a necessary sign [or *tekhmerion*]" (1.2.18). Aristotle makes the connection between rhetorical induction and its deductive counterpart when he says that examples, necessary, and fallible signs are three of the four sources of enthymemes (2.25.8). Signs in effect become enthymemes by becoming the minor premises of syllogisms: If there is smoke, there is fire; There is smoke; Therefore there is fire. We may note that the difference between enthymematic and paradigmatic inference is not in the structure, but in the movement of reasoning — from the general to the particular or the reverse.

To these forms of reasoning by implication, two other forms of inference — not noted by Aristotle — must be added: implicatures and presuppositions. I can say that the room is warm and mean that you ought to open the window: a reason for opening the window can count as a request that it be opened. My seemingly uninformative statement *implicates* the request. Gricean implicatures also explain the informativeness of such pseudo-tautologies as 'Boys will be Boys'. We assume the speaker is being informative despite appearances to the contrary. It is important to note that Gricean conversational implicatures and enthymematic ones are alike in that they are cancelable without contradiction. In a sense, such implicatures *are* enthymematic, since the contextual information they make use of is not 'explicit'. Inference to presup-

positions also counts as an additional type: that the room is warm presupposes that there is a room, that boys will be boys presupposes that there are boys.

Pathos and êthos

Aristotle's theory of the emotions is straightforwardly cognitive: inferences to particular beliefs are a necessary condition of particular emotional states. There is a clear "relationship of emotion to reasoned argumentation" (Fortenbaugh 1975: 17). This kind of reasoning is fundamentally different from the use of premises *about* emotional states to reach demonstrative conclusions about those states. In these cases, the conclusions are propositions *about* those states, propositions such as: The belief that one has been insulted is a necessary condition of anger. In Aristotle, "emotional response is explained syllogistically and the efficient cause is treated as the middle term" (Fortenbaugh 1975: 14). While we cannot say, He has been insulted, *therefore*, he is angry; we can say, He is angry *because* he was insulted. Fortenbaugh's formulation may be completed by showing that emotional response can also be generated paradigmatically. Because ragged clothes are a sign of "an apparently destructive or painful evil happening to one who does not deserve it and which a person might expect himself or one of his own to suffer, and this when it seems close at hand" (2.8.1), the sight of those clothes can move a spectator to pity.

There is a related point that Aristotle does not make; it is inference that also permits the experience of differing emotions based on the same beliefs:

> I can believe that the mortality rate for free-fall parachutists is very high and so infer that the prospect of a free-fall parachute drop ending in death is very probable. My companion might hold the same belief and make the same inference. Now if we both decide to make a free-fall parachute drop, or are ordered to, I might be in a state of fear but my companion in a state of excitement. For my mind might be dominated by the evaluation of the situation as dangerous *to me,* while my companion's mind, while allowing that what he is about to do might be dangerous, is taken up by the realization that here is a challenge worthy of him (Lyons 1980: 35).

What permits the experience of different emotions in this case is that each "speaker" or "audience" construes himself differently, as valuing different things. Again, cognition is essential.

In Aristotle, what the characters speakers create for themselves or create

within their speeches — their êthê — are also the products of audience inference to particular beliefs. In this case, however, the result is not a state but a disposition. In the case of *pathos*, speakers evoke the emotion of friendship; in the case of *êthos*, speakers create in the mind of an audience a disposition that they are acting and will act according to the dictates of friendship. Beliefs that speakers instill in audiences can never guarantee their disposition toward friendliness; nevertheless, since holding some of a particular class of beliefs is a necessary condition for the presence of this disposition, speakers can stimulate friendliness by increasing likelihood that beliefs of that class will be held. For example, friendly feelings may be founded on the following inferred beliefs:

> [they are friendly to] those that take them seriously in some way, for example, admiring them and regarding them as serious people and finding pleasure in them, and especially those feeling this way about what they wish to be admired in themselves or in regard to what they want to seem serious about or what they find pleasure in. And [they are friendly to] those like themselves and having similar interests (2.4.19-20).

In the cognitive theory we are outlining, *pathos* and *êthos* are evoked in accord with the Cooperative Principle and meaning$_{NN}$, as modified for persuasive exchanges. If I intend to evoke anger, for example, I will do so by attempting to persuade you that you have been belittled or insulted. If you are persuaded, and you become angry, your anger will be in part a consequence of your recognition of my intent. But of course I can deceive you as to the facts; you may not have been insulted. Similarly, if I intend to evoke friendly feelings in you, I will do so by attempting to persuade you that I am well-disposed toward you. If you are persuaded, and you feel friendly toward me, it will be in part a consequence of your recognition of my intent. But of course I can deceive you about the true state of my disposition toward you; I may hold you in contempt. In both cases, CP is maintained so long as you believe me to be sharing the truth with you, and you view us as sharing values and perspectives. Naturally, in neither case am I likely to say, I intend to make you angry, I intend to make you friendly. I avoid such statements because they thematize not anger or friendship and their justifications, but my intent and its justification.

Style reconsidered

A cognitive theory of rhetoric will fail to be complete unless style is also construed as a matter of inference. Style is both a level at which discourse is pitched (in modern linguistics a register) and a set of semantic, syntactic and prosodic variants, within that register. In the former sense, a particular style is appropriate if it is proportional to situation and subject matter; in Aristotle's words, "the lexis will be appropriate if it is ... proportional [*analogon*]" (3.7.1). The mathematical analogy is exactly right; it emphasizes the close fit between a rhetorical situation and its verbal response. When he praises Gorgias's exclamation to the swallow who let go her droppings on him, Aristotle exemplifies this principle of proportionality: "[Gorgias] said, 'Shame on you, Philomela'; for if a bird did it there was no shame, but [it would have been] shameful for a maiden. He thus rebuked the bird well by calling it what it once had been rather than what it now was" (3.3.4). The style is perceived as correct because we infer an exact proportion between the situation and Gorgias's verbal response to it, an exact proportion that Gorgias intended. Its form is a wish, directed at a bird; its force is a judgment, directed at a woman. This episode can be easily described in Gricean terms. In this case, Grice's maxim of Manner is violated — shame is not applicable to actual swallows — and from that violation we are asked to draw an inference.

But style is also a set of semantic and syntactic variants within a register, a set that in a cognitive theory must depend for its effect on inference. In this sense, style is a matter of schemes or syntactic patterns, and tropes or semantic transformations.

For Aristotle, metaphor is the paradigm trope. He regards it as an analogical process including, not only what we would call metaphor, but also what we would call simile, metonymy ("All hands on deck"), personification, and hyperbole (3.10-11 and *Poetics* 20-22). He regards the understanding of all of these tropes as a matter of inference: "Metaphor most brings about learning; for when [Homer] calls old age "stubble", he creates understanding and knowledge through the genus, since both old age and stubble are [species of the genus of] things that have lost their bloom" (3.10.2).

In a cognitive theory of style, all tropes must involve inference in their understanding. In Gricean terms, a maxim is flouted and an implicature created. For example, 'All hands on deck' is perceived as a mismatch: hands seldom exist apart from bodies and if they did, they would certainly lack

motility. But a sailor's hands represent his most important characteristic — his sailoring labor; because this is so, they can form a metonymy that means 'All sailors on deck'. Because hands are a salient characteristic of anyone seen as a source of labor or assistance, we have such other metonymies as "Lend a helping hand" and "Give us a hand up". All involve the flouting of the Gricean maxim of Quality.

Although all tropes involve inference in their understanding, not all tropes function in arguments. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca carry a cognitive theory of tropes a step further than Aristotle, when they differentiate between their aesthetic and argumentative functions: "We consider a [trope] to be *argumentative*, if it brings about a change of perspective, and its use seems normal in relation to this new situation" (169). The purpose of a trope may, after all, be merely aesthetic: "if ... the speech does not bring about the adherence of the hearer to this argumentative form, the figure will be considered an embellishment, a figure of style. It can excite admiration, but this will be on the aesthetic plane, or in recognition of the speaker's originality" (ibid.). When Byron writes that "The Assyrians came down like wolves on the fold", we understand this simile, as we understand all figures: by means of inference. In addition, Byron's trope is functional; it makes the attack appropriately vivid. Nevertheless, it is not argumentative.

Irony — meaning the opposite of what one says — and litotes — understating what one says to intensify its effect — exemplify the Perelmanian link between trope and argument. Both are argumentative in the following case, because both are designed to bring about change in hearer perspective:

> litotes can be converted into *irony* by suppressing the negation. Of the same misshapen man of whom one would say, using litotes, "He is no Adonis", one might say ironically, "He is an Adonis". In the first case, we have a movement of thought through a scale of values; in the second, there is a confrontation of a qualification with an apparent reality. In the first case, the direction is dominant; in the second, one does not want to bring about a sudden turnabout of the mind, but one wants the mind to take note of the ridicule arising from an incompatibility (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969: 292).

Aristotle hints at the connection between schemes and argumentation when he says of antithesis: "Such a *lexis* is pleasing because opposites are ... like a syllogism, for refutation is a bringing together of contraries" (3.9.8). But Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca carry the classical theory of figures a step further when they explicitly place schemes as well as tropes under the rubric of

inference: antithesis (273); insinuation (467); hesitation (240); antimetabole (444); contrarium (344); and reticence (467).

Antithesis and *insinuation* are familiar in everyday speech. In a case of hesitation, a speaker says: "At the time the republic suffered great wrong because of the consuls, should we say because of their stupidity or because of their perversity or because of both" (quoted in Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969: 240). *Antimetabole* is a reversal in the order of words repeated in successive clauses: for example, I do not live to eat, but eat to live (Quintilian, *Institutes* IX, iii: 85). *Contrariurn* is a scheme in which one of two opposite statements is used to prove the other, for example, "Now how should you expect one who has never been hostile to his own interests to be friendly to another's" (Quintilian, a*d Herrenium* IV, xviii: 25). *Reticence* is a figure in which "we begin to say something and then stop short, and what we have already said leaves enough to arouse suspicion, as follows: "He who is so handsome and so young, recently at a stranger's house — I am unwilling to say more" (*ad Herrenium* IV, liv: 67).

Understanding each of these schemes involves inference. Moreover, each is argumentative, involving a change of perspective: the example of hesitation turns an apparent choice into a real accusation; the example of antimetabole turns a contrast into a moral judgment; the example of contrarium turns self-interest into selfishness; the example of reticence turns apparent virtue into vice. In Gricean terms, these conclusions are implicatures generated by violations of the maxim of Manner, a maxim related "not ... to what is said but, rather, to how what is said is to be said" (1989: 27, 33-37).

In the case of schemes like *hyperbaton* (word order reversal), *alliteration*, *anaphora* (a form of parallelism), and *climax*, a similar analysis is possible. When in *Profiles in Courage*, John Kennedy wrote: "Already American vessels have been searched, seized, and sunk", he used all of these schemes, each of which flouts the maxim of Manner. It was perfectly obvious to Kennedy and his audience that his initial reversal of noun and adverb violates the word order of ordinary English. So, unless Kennedy is making a mistake no native speaker ever makes, he must be trying to get something across by this reversal, a reversal that alliteration highlights: the sense of the immediacy of this crisis is a reasonable inference. Similarly, the alliteration that marks the three predicates draws attention to them and to their climactic order. It seems a reasonable inference from this flouting of the maxim of Manner that we are meant to

be startled by the progressive violations of American sovereignty; we are meant to infer that our sovereignty has been violated beyond endurance.

The link of style to proof is easily established: the flouting of these maxims expresses the character of speakers and their emotions; it creates ê*thos* and pathos. Grice's A is, plausibly, angry with justification, an effect conveyed by the trope of irony; President Kennedy is, plausibly, indignant with just cause, an effect conveyed by the schemes of hyperbaton, alliteration, anaphora and climax. These stylistic turns, then, are the equivalent of arguments; from them, as from premises, we are meant to infer the conclusions that A is angry and that we ought to be, that Kennedy is indignant and that we ought to be. A says in effect that a fellow that acts that way is rightly condemned; Kennedy says in effect that a nation that acts that way ought to be confronted.

Arrangement reconsidered

Arrangement — the organization of a speech — may seem equally remote from the inferential process, which apparently functions only *within* arguments. But we shall show that arrangement is also a form of proof. Aristotle discusses two forms of organization, both fundamental to any extended persuasive event: the first is logical/chronological and follows the order of implication or of events; the second is psychological and is sensitive rather to shifting states of mind on the part of audiences. Of the first, logical/chronological order, Aristotle says: "There are two parts of a speech: for it is necessary [first] to state the subject and [then] to demonstrate it" (3.13.1). Concerning the second, psychological order, he says, for example, that introductions should make an audience "well-disposed and ... attentive" (3.14.7). Of conclusions he says: "the epilogue is made up of four things: disposing the hearer toward the speaker and unfavorably toward the opponent; amplifying and minimizing; moving the hearer into an emotional reaction [*path*ê]; and [giving] a reminder of the chief points of the speech" (3.19.1). Both sorts of arrangements are functions of the same Gricean maxim of Manner — be orderly — though the import of the maxim is construed differently in each case.

The logical/chronological and psychological orders underlie all extended forms of persuasive communication, from the classical oration to the experimental paper. For example, the experimental paper follows a logical order —

that of induction — while, at the same time, exhibiting a sensitivity to the psychology of its audience. Its organization constitutes a master finding system, consisting of an abstract, along with subsystems of headings, figures, tables, and references. In line with the *êthos* of its audience, such an organization encourages objective reading, rather than subjective involvement.

In meeting audience expectations of this sort, writers make also rational the inference that they are legitimate members of a particular discourse community. In Gricean terms, by heeding the maxim of Manner, they create an argument from êthos and establish a beachhead for the Cooperative Principle. When such formal requirements are flouted, in fact, genius and fraud become difficult to distinguish, as Hardy and Littlewood discovered when evaluating the unsolicited scribblings of an obscure Indian mathematician who, as it turned out, was in the class of Euler and Gauss. Two distinguished English mathematicians had already returned Ramanujan's papers to their owner. They had not troubled to make a judgment or rather, one presumes, they had made a judgment on the basis of *êthos* alone (Hardy 1967: 30-38). It is also exactly on the rationality of this inference — this presumption of legitimacy — that the perpetrators of scientific and scholarly fraud in part rely, as in the case of a medical fraud in which impeccably organized papers recorded and analyzed data on non-existent patients (Hammerschmidt and Gross 1994: 795-799).

There is a second way in which the admonition to be orderly enhances audience acceptance: the order in which proofs are presented is crucial to persuasion. In the Gettysburg Address, Lincoln deliberately begins with facts that were uncontentious to a Northern audience. When the United States was founded in 1776, he asserts, it was "dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal"; "now", eighty-seven years later, "we are engaged in a great civil war" in which that proposition is chiefly at issue. As a consequence of that war, "we have come to dedicate" a cemetery for soldiers who have died in its course; though our dedication can in no way match their dedication, the sacrifice they made. These statements participate in a logical/chronolocrical order: they are the premises from which Lincoln will draw his conclusions; they also participate in a psychological order: Lincoln can rely on his audience to be well disposed to such statements and to the person who makes them. In the words of Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca: "arguments ... must be advanced in the order which gives them the greatest strength, and this means

that ordinarily one will begin with that argument whose strength is independent of the strength of the others" (500).

For Lincoln and, he hopes, for his audience, the Civil War is about keeping faith with the Founders and the Union dead; to refuse to do so, Lincoln will imply, is to betray their memory. He is well aware that an audience must be prepared for and accommodated to a conclusion that calls for so deep a commitment. It is for this reason that Lincoln does not merely say that "it is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the great task remaining before us"; he gives a series of reasons for his assertion: "it is rather for us to be dedicated to the great task remaining before us — that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion; that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain; that a government of the people, by the people and for the people shall not perish from the earth" (Lincoln 1946: 734). At the end of this final sentence, in three clauses arrayed in climactic order, Lincoln links the living, the Union dead, and the Founders in a common, urgent purpose: national survival. In the words of Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca: "a speech does not leave the hearer the same as he was at the beginning. ... The order adopted is crucial precisely because the changes in the audience are both effective and contingent" (491; see also 499-500).

Presence reconsidered

Presence, the last persuasive vehicle of which we shall speak, is an effect of style and arrangement. The *pisteis* or proofs are specifically excluded when Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca say that presence, "at first a psychological phenomenon, becomes an essential element in argumentation" (117). The purpose of presence is fully to arrest the hearer's attention, to "[fill] the whole field of consciousness ... So as to isolate it, as it were, from the hearer's overall mentality" (118). The devices of presence are an open set. They can be verbal: presence can be created by the accumulation of detail (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969: 144-145), the use of the present tense to relate past events (160), and the repetition of the same arguments in different form (478). They can also be non-verbal: presence can be created by the use of tables, figures, photographs, white space, and type size.

Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca give an excellent example of the creation of presence by means of symbol and trope:

> Not only is the symbol easier to handle, it can impose itself with a presence that the thing symbolized cannot have: the flag which is seen or described can wave, flap in the wind, and unfurl. In spite of its bonds of participation, the symbol maintains a kind of individuality which makes possible a great variety of manipulations. "There are no longer any Pyrenees" [Il n'y a plus de Pyrenées] does not merely express a political idea [that of the unification of the royal houses of France and Spain in the reign of Louis XIV]: it evokes also the fatigues and dangers of a frontier and the enormous efforts needed to abolish it (334-335).

Arrangement routinely enhances presence. For example, speakers commonly use introductions to give prominence to matters on which consensus is high, while they reserve conclusions for emotion-laden statements that must be motivated by the cumulative proofs of the speech. But there is a more interesting, if not a more important means of creating presence. Since well-entrenched genres routinely obey Grice's maxim to be orderly, it is possible for speakers to arrest the audience's attention by flouting this maxim. Cicero (1910: 75) does this brilliantly in his first speech against Catiline, which begins abruptly: "Quo usque tandem abutere, Catilina, patientia nostra?" [How long, Catiline, will you persist in exhausting our patience?]. In his *exordium* Cicero flouts the maxim of Manner to implicate the urgency of the Catilinean crisis; his violation has a persuasive point. This effect is also evident, though in a subtler form, when, in the Gettysburg Address, Lincoln moves without pause from his initial premises to his conclusion that the living owe the dead a debt, not merely of gratitude, but also of labor and risk. In this passage Lincoln flouts the maxim of Manner to implicate that the importance of the task ahead is entailed by fundamental American values. Although in these and in all cases the initial consequence of presence is psychological — the hearer's attention is momentarily arrested — its final consequence is argumentative because hearers infer that this arrestment must have a *point*.

The contribution of arrangement to presence is augmented by the contribution of style. Lincoln's central trope is a metaphor. The USA is a living thing "*brought forth* on this continent"; it is a nation that "shall have a new *birth* of freedom", one that "shall not *perish* from this earth". Crucial to this continued, though metaphorical national life is the recent death of these soldiers: they "gave their lives that this nation might live". In this startling combination of a trope, metaphor, and scheme, polyptoton, Lincoln equates their real death

with the nation's metaphorical life. But it is only we, "the living", who can turn this equation into a fact; only we can insure "that this nation, under God, shall have a new *birth* of freedom — and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall *not perish from* this earth". In his closing epistrophe, Lincoln turns his metaphor back into a fact: the nation is *literally* its people.

In the Gettysburg Address, patterns of arrangement and style converge to give presence to the nation as a living thing, a precious inheritance now in jeopardy. Not coincidentally, this view is also the conclusion of Lincoln's argument.

In the matter of presence, a distinction must be drawn, especially relevant to the sciences. In creating presence, Lincoln is counting on a *lack* of awareness on the part of his audience; the effect he achieves would be undermined by an awareness of its means: "everything that promotes perception of a device — the mechanical, farfetched, abstract, codified, and formal aspects of speech — will prompt the search for a reality that is dissociated from if" (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969: 453). This use of presence may be contrasted with its employment in experimental reports. The very detailed descriptions and the clusters of tables and figures common to these reports seem to flout the maxim of Quantity and to put the maxim of Relation in immediate jeopardy. But in fact nothing is amiss: it is the goal of the sciences involved that supplies the relevance of these avalanches of information. In the sciences, though not in public address, presence is under the control of common goals designed to guide audience attention in a manner relevant to disciplinary growth. Presence does not have a strategic purpose in the sciences but is, when Grice's maxims are strictly obeyed, communicative action all the way down.

Conclusion

Our reconstruction attempts to combine the strengths of pragmatics and rhetoric. We do so by giving one strand of the rhetorical tradition a cognitive reading, one that suggests the compatibility of two otherwise separate understandings of linguistic communication and interaction.

Chapter 29

Hermeneutic interpretation and pragmatic interpretation

> Interpretari est docere circa orationem seu circa orationem non satis cognitum facere cognitum.
>
> Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz

1. Introduction

In an essay called "Semantics and hermeneutics", Gadamer (1976: 82-94) undertakes a comparison between hermeneutic reflection and semantic analysis. Both are said to share a starting point (namely, "the linguistic form of expression in which our thought is formulated"; 82) and to be alike in scope (they have "a truly universal perspective"; ibid.). But the gist of the comparison is to show how, at some point, "semantics transcends itself and becomes something else" (86). It is at this point that hermeneutics steps in. It purports not only to identify this "something else", which, though necessarily present in our use of language, remains unattainable by the methods of semantics, but also to account for it.

The attempt to provide such a 'differential' characterization of the task of hermeneutics is, to my mind, extremely helpful. Since both semantics and hermeneutics ostensively deal with (linguistic) "meaning", by highlighting their differences either in the aspects of meaning dealt with, or in the analytical procedures they employ, or in both, a better understanding of the specific contribution of each is to be expected.

In this paper, I will try to go a step further in applying the differential-comparative approach taken by Gadamer. Only, I will compare hermeneutics not with semantics, but with a discipline, also concerned with "meaning", whose aims and scope seem to be, on the face of it, much closer to hermeneutics. This discipline is pragmatics. Like hermeneutics, pragmatics too goes

"beyond" semantics in that it takes into account many aspects of meaning that are not usually included within the scope of semantics. Like hermeneutics (and unlike semantics), pragmatics is concerned with the conditions pertaining to the actual *use* of language. Like hermeneutics, it purports to explain what is involved in our actual 'interpretation' and 'understanding' of discourse, above, beyond, or in addition to the fact that the words and sentences we confront have certain given, conventional meanings (accounted for by semantics).

Given such a *prima facie* similarity of concerns, a comparison between pragmatics and hermeneutics — especially in the light of the fact that these two disciplines stem from quite different traditions — is likely to be quite rewarding. For, if we discover that some hermeneutical theses can be rephrased as pragmatic principles (and vice-versa), this will contribute to making each more assimilable by whoever belongs to the other tradition, and the remaining, non-reducible theses and concepts will be better understood by the very attempt (and failure) to recast them in the other discipline's terms. Quite apart from such possible 'practical' advantages, however, it seems to me that a comparison of the kind here undertaken corresponds to the spirit of hermeneutical reflection itself, as described by Gadamer:

> ... the hermeneutically enlightened consciousness seems to me to establish a higher truth in that it draws itself into its own reflection. Its truth, namely, is that of translation. It is higher because it allows the foreign to become one's own, not by destroying it critically or reproducing it uncritically, but by explicating it within one's own horizons with one's own concepts and thus giving it new validity. Translation allows what is foreign and what is one's own to merge in a new form by defending the point of the other even if it be opposed to one's own view (Gadamer 1976: 94).

As it is impossible to cover in a single paper all the variety of conceptions of hermeneutics and pragmatics, I will restrict myself to a comparison between some of the principles of hermeneutics as conceived by its foremost contemporary champion, H. G. Gadamer, and their possible counterparts in pragmatics, as I conceive of this discipline (see Chapter 1). As is appropriate for this kind of comparative undertaking, I will move between the two disciplines as the comparison proceeds.

2. The necessity of implicitness and the role of context

"Hermeneutical inquiry" — says Gadamer (1976: 88) — "is based on the fact that language always leads behind itself and behind the facade of overt verbal expression that it first presents". Semantics, even if it goes as far as to expose the semantic structure underlying "the linguistic form of a text as a whole", is essentially concerned with what is explicitly said and meant in the text. But this is not sufficient, because "linguistic expressions ... always fall short of what they evoke and communicate; ...in speaking there is always implied a meaning that is imposed on the vehicle of the expression, that only functions as a meaning behind the meaning" (ibid.). Hermeneutics is concerned with such implied or implicit meanings. And so is pragmatics. Phenomena such as the so-called 'conversational implicatures' (Grice 1975) and 'indirect speech acts' (Searle 1979c) are considered paradigmatic pragmatic phenomena by all pragmaticists precisely because they are clear cases of something "which is unsaid and nevertheless made present by speaking" (Gadamer 1976: 88).

If the verbal expression, in text or speech, is always 'incomplete' in that there is always a 'meaning' which lies beyond what is explicitly expressed in it, one cannot expect to obtain a full(er) 'understanding' of a piece of discourse by focussing on its inspection alone. The implied meaning(s) can only be revealed, discovered or guessed at, by appealing jointly to what is linguistically expressed and to the 'context'. Both hermeneutics and pragmatics make heavy use of the notion of context. The first systematic developments of pragmatics arose indeed in connection with the realization that the concepts and methods of semantics are insufficient to account for the meaning of sentences that are inherently context-dependent because they contain expressions — called 'egocentric particulars' (Russell), 'token-reflexives' (Reichenbach), 'indexical' (Bar-Hillel), and more recently 'deictic' — which render the sentence fully intelligible only by reference to the situation in which it is uttered. Such expressions (like 'here', 'I', 'this') Gadamer (1976: 88) calls 'occasional expressions'. 'Occasionality', which he defines as "dependency on the situation in which an expression is used", is presented by him as the first example of the implied or implicit, i.e., of "that which is said in spite of not being said" (ibid.).

But the 'context' soon proved to be essential for the determination of meaning not only in connection with the relatively restricted class of deictic expressions. The story of pragmatics is, to a large extent, the story of the

discovery of the multiple and unsuspected ways in which meaning is context-dependent, accompanied by the corresponding broadening of the notion of 'context'. Not any more just a few situational parameters (e.g., the identification of speaker and addressee, the spatio-temporal coordinates of the utterance) coupled with the immediate linguistic environment of the utterance (its 'co-text'), but a host of other co-textual and contextual factors (e.g., the genre, style, and linguistic register employed, the beliefs, desires and expectations of speaker and addressee, the communicative norms of the community, the knowledge shared by its members, etc.) were discovered to be eventually relevant for understanding even the simplest utterance (see Chapters 1 and 8a). Context-dependency became the rule rather than the exception, and pragmaticists would certainly whole-heartedly endorse Gadamer's claims that "dependency on the situation is not itself situational" and that "relativity to situation and opportunity constitutes the very essence of speaking" (Gadamer 1976: 88).

The emphasis on the role of context and on what is implicitly conveyed through its interaction with the verbal expression goes hand in hand with a justified insistence on what is unique in every utterance, as opposed to the 'conventional' meaning of the sentence uttered. The equivalence of semantic (or 'conventional') meaning of two expressions is no guarantee that, in a given context, they convey the same meaning, just as the very same expression (with the same conventional meaning) is likely to convey different things in different contexts. From this, Gadamer infers that untranslatability is the rule, not only in highly individualized poetical language, but also generally: "The thesis that one expression can be substituted for another is, if I view the matter correctly, contradicted by the moment of individualization in the speaking of a language as such" (Gadamer 1976: 87). This does not mean, however, that conventional meaning is dispensable. Quite on the contrary: "the fact that one can never depart too far from linguistic conventions is clearly basic to the life of language: he who speaks a private language understood by no one else, does not speak at all" (Gadamer 1976: 85). Consequently, the two tendencies, individualization and respect for the linguistic conventions, must coexist and balance each other, if understanding is to be possible.

Pragmatics, though less prone to admit untranslatability,[1] also acknowledges that the meaning conveyed by an utterance is always the result of the (possibly unique) interplay between the (conventional) sentence meaning and the context. Thus, in some contexts an utterance of *It is hot in here* will be

understood as a request to open the window, while in others it may be understood as a statement about the weather conditions. Even when what is actually conveyed is nothing but the conventional sentence meaning itself, i.e., when the utterance is to be understood 'transparently', such an understanding of the utterance cannot be reached without checking whether the context is not such as to suggest or require an alternative, non-transparent understanding (see Chapter 15b and Dascal 1983: 84). Not even the acceptance of a general principle of expressibility[2] permits the total elimination of the context, for the use of a 'more explicit' paraphrase of what is implicitly conveyed is likely to change the meaning of the utterance, as illustrated by the difference between *Go to hell!!*, *I curse you!* and *I say I curse you* (Gadamer 1976: 89; Dascal 1983: 86). On the other hand, even meanings that are apparently conveyed entirely through the context, without any 'conventional' (or semantic) contribution (e.g., the utterance of *bligh blugh blagh* in response to a silly request — see Ziff 1972; see also Chapter 25), are in fact understood only via reliance upon our mastery of conventional meanings (in this case, our ability to recognize that such a 'sentence' has no conventional meaning whatsoever, i.e., does not belong to the semantic system of English).[3]

3. Types of context

Given this overwhelming importance of an apparently unlimited number of contextual factors for achieving understanding, and the concomitant inevitability of implicitness, one might conclude that understanding — if it occurs at all — is miraculous. Neither pragmatics nor hermeneutics accept such a conclusion. Rather, they try to elucidate what are the conditions and mechanisms that make understanding not only possible, but also a quite commonplace achievement. Yet, though comparable and inter-translatable in some respects, their accounts of such conditions and mechanisms differ considerably, as we shall see.

The first step in taming the apparent wildness of the context is to try to distinguish the various kinds of contextual factors that influence understanding, and to describe more precisely their roles in generating different types of implicitness. As far as I can see, Gadamerian hermeneutics stresses three different (though inter-related) aspects of the contextual determination of understanding: (a) the fact that behind every statement (or any other utter-

ance) there is always a 'question' that motivates it; (b) the role of the 'prejudices' or prejudgements of the interpreter as constitutive factors of all interpretation; (c) the mediation of all experience through language, which functions thus as an all-embracing context or medium of our life. The last of these aspects, particularly in its implications for the relationship between language and thought, will be examined in section 5 below. Let us turn now to the other two aspects.

According to Gadamer, the hermeneutical *Urphaenomen* is this: "no assertion is possible that cannot be understood as an answer to a question, and assertions can only be understood in this way" (1976: 11; see also Gadamer 1981: 106). Such a phenomenon is claimed to be "the most clear-cut evidence of the unsaid revealing itself in what is said" (1976: 89). It follows that, unless one is somehow aware of the question that motivates a statement, one is unable to understand the statement. Gadamer believes that this can be generalized to speech acts other than assertions (e.g., commands, complaints, etc.). Presumably, in its general form, this idea functions as a sort of dialectical principle of action and reaction: every linguistic action must be understood as a reaction. In a dialogue, what it is a (direct) reaction to is reasonably clear, namely, the preceding utterance of the interlocutor (i.e., a piece of co-text). The pragmatic analysis of dialogue has coined the term 'conversational demand' to denote that to which, at each point of the development of the conversation, the next contribution is required to address itself to (cf. Chapter 2). It is by reference to such a conversational demand — which, of course, is constantly shifting in the course of the conversation — that what might be called the 'pragmatic appropriateness' of any given utterance is to be assessed. Ostensive inappropriateness (e.g., an utterance which is ostensively irrelevant to the subject-matter at hand; a question which is followed not by an answer but by another question) may trigger a process of looking for an alternative interpretation of the utterance (e.g., a 'conversational implicature') which shows how, in spite of the appearances to the contrary, the utterance does in fact meet the conversational demand (cf. Chapter 2; Grice 1975). It may also, alternatively, be viewed as one of the several types of 'digression' (see Chapter 10).

Attempts to generalize the concept of "the question" and its contextual role in understanding can proceed along a number of routes. Whole texts, rather than single utterances, can be viewed as understandable only *qua* reactions either to other texts or to a given state of affairs. An example of the

latter would be Zola's *J'accuse* as a response to the Dreyfus affair; an example of the former, any of the contributions by one of the participants in a scientific or philosophical controversy.[4] Theories can also be conceived as understandable only as reactions (involving, for example, criticism and improvement) to other theories and/or to a 'problem situation' (cf. Liedman 1986: 119; Popper 1972: 107;[5] Meyer 1986: 280ff). And actions other than linguistic actions can also be claimed to be understandable only in the light of "the question" or "the problem" that motivates them. Gadamer's insistence on the dialectical model of all understanding[6] has, among other things, the function of justifying such generalizations of the decisive role of "the question" for approaching any assignment of meaning. Yet, as one moves away from the relatively clear-cut case of an actual conversation or of controversies, in which conversational demands can be identified with relative ease and precision, the corresponding notion of "the question" tends to become increasingly vague and obscure. Furthermore, rather than a contextual *given* that can be relied upon for the interpretation of a problematic utterance, "the question" becomes itself something that, like the interpretation one is seeking, must be *inferred* from the utterance and other contextual information, and thereby looses much of its usefulness as an aid to interpretation.

Gadamer's 19th century predecessors, Schleiermacher and Dilthey (whose psychologistic hermeneutics he calls 'romantic'), stressed the importance of being fully aware of the actual historical context of production of a text in order to understand it. Their goal was to develop a method that, by enhancing such an awareness, would allow for interpreting a text in the light of its original context, avoiding misunderstandings and distortions, and being thus in a position to recover the (objective) meaning of the text. Such a method would require, among other things, that the interpreter free himself from his anachronistic perspective, dictated by his interests and prejudices, and place himself in a position to re-experience the historical situation to which the text belongs. In contradistinction to them, Gadamer — following Heidegger — points out the impossibility of such a project, by stressing that (a) no interpreter can free himself from a host of 'prejudgments' and categories which are constitutive of his being, and (b) no interpretation is possible if the interpreter is a *tabula rasa*, devoid of conceptual categories, values, and prejudgments: "all understanding inevitably involves some prejudice" (1975: 239). But this necessity of prejudice, which is for him in fact a condition of possibility of *any* experience,[7] is not to be viewed as a negative fact, to be avoided as much as

possible. On the contrary, Gadamer contends that hermeneutics must show how prejudice is effectively and positively employed in order to create meaning and achieve understanding (see Dascal 1999).

This amounts to a shift of emphasis from the 'context of production' to the 'context of interpretation', from the historicity or situation-boundedness of the author, speaker, or text to that of the addressee or interpreter. The picture that emerges from this shift is that of an interpreter who is not only active in the sense of actively gathering all the contextual information that contributes to understanding the meaning that *is* in the text (presumably by having been *put* there by its author), but, more fundamentally, in the sense of someone who *creates* meaning, someone who is *constitutive* of meaning through his very activity *qua* interpreter. The way in which interpretation contributes decisively to the generation of meaning in music and drama is taken by Gadamer as paradigmatic of the constitutive role of all interpretation. Just as *any* work of art "needs to be perceived by the spectator in order to be completed, so it is universally true of texts that only in the process of understanding is the dead trace of meaning transformed back into living meaning" (Gadamer 1975: 146). But this should not be mistaken for the mere 'discovery' of a meaning encapsulated in the work of art, the text, or in any deed. Understanding — with its necessary bias — is constitutive of meaning, it "must be conceived as part of the process of the coming into being of meaning" (ibid.).

These two contextual factors ("the question" and the interpreter's bias) have been (at least partly) taken into account by pragmatic theory, without being given, however, the privileged status Gadamer grants them. They form part of a whole set of contextual factors, and their specificity can be better perceived within the framework of a typology of contextual factors.[8]

In terms of this typology, Gadamer's notion of "the question", if understood — as suggested above — as equivalent to the notion of "conversational demand", belongs to the specific meta-linguistic context. The notion of "prejudice", on the other hand, seems to belong to the kind of context we have called "extra-linguistic background". However, in the light of Gadamer's tendency to generalize and extend both notions, each of them can finally come to apply to any of the levels and kinds of context discussed above. Prejudgments can be as specific as assumptions and expectations about the speaker's or author's beliefs and sayings, and "the question" can be as broad as "the question of our times". These notions, therefore, though being very sugges-

tive, are not sufficiently precise to illuminate the details of the actual process of interpretation by means of contextual clues and cues.

It must be acknowledged that pragmatic theory, though taking into account the intepreter's background knowledge, his current expectations, and so on, has generally overlooked the *constitutive* role of the interpreter, stressed by Gadamer's vindication of prejudice. Pragmatics usually concentrates on speaker's intentions (speaker's meaning) and views all the contextual factors as subordinated to the goal of getting as close as possible to that meaning. In this, it may be as 'psychologistic' as 'romantic' hermeneutics, and Gadamer's criticism of the latter's obsession with speaker's intentions might indeed apply to much of the work in pragmatics inspired by Grice. However, nothing prevents pragmatic theory from appropriating this insight in its own terms. In one specific case, I have indeed argued — following suggestions of some psychologists - that the interpreter not only approximately detects a previously existent "speaker's meaning", but actually *creates*, by her interpretative activity, such a meaning for the speaker himself (cf. Dascal 1983: 99ff.; see also Chapter 4). This is what happens sometimes in communication with very young infants. As Gadamer points out, it is also what usually happens in poetry, music, and drama. The ubiquitous phenomenon of an addressee's "understanding" a speaker's act or utterance "better" than the speaker himself suggests that, to some extent, this occurs also in normal human communication. Nevertheless, one should not forget that the very same phenomenon can be the source of Laing-style chains of misunderstandings that are characteristic of pathological communication (cf. Chapter 14b).

4. The process of interpretation

Gadamer often insists that, unlike his predecessor hermeneuticians, his intention is not to provide a *method* of interpretation. Nevertheless, he contends that the principles of philosophical hermeneutics account for the essential aspects of the process of interpretation: "The hermeneutics that I characterize as philosophic is not introduced as a new procedure of interpretation or explication. Basically it only describes what always happens wherever an interpretation is convincing and successful" (Gadamer 1981: 111).

In the light of the contextual factors already discussed, Gadamer stresses the following crucial aspects of the process of interpretation: (a) it is essen-

tially 'circular'; (b) when it is successful, it involves a 'fusion of horizons', where (c) 'effective-historical consciousness' and (d) tradition play a central role.

Given the context-boundedness or 'historicity' of both text and interpreter, and given the essential openness of the context (i.e., the fact that potentially any contextual factor can turn out to be relevant for the interpretation), whatever understanding is achieved is always provisional, and likely to be revised or entirely replaced in the light of contextual factors previously overlooked. But, for Gadamer, the fallible and circular character of all understanding is more radical and insurmountable than might be thought. It is not just a matter of having to understand wholes in terms of the understanding of parts which are themselves only understandable in terms of their positions in the wholes they belong to, as pictured in the standard descriptions of the 'hermeneutic circle'.[9] Given the constitutive role of the interpreter's pre-judgments, which implies that there is no such a thing as "the meaning" of a text to be "discovered", coupled with the fact that such pre-judgments are themselves not fixed but shifting (among other things due to the 'resistance' of the 'thing itself' expressed in the text) in the course of the process of understanding so that the interpreter himself is shaped by the process, the hermeneutic circle must be understood as an ontologically basic level, prior to the distinction between subject and object.

This radicalization of the conception of the circle, however, is also the key to a solution to the apparently insoluble problem it poses for understanding. The positive ontological role ascribed to the circle — which leads to claims about the linguistic character of our being-in-the-world (see Chapter 18) — indicates that it cannot be a 'vicious' circle. In so far as interpretation is concerned, this means that the circle is in fact a spiral of successive, more encompassing understandings. These are not achieved by 'neutralizing' the interpreter's horizon of pre-judgments, nor by ignoring the text's contextual horizon, but by taking full advantage of the interplay between both, leading to a 'fusion of horizons'. This process is illustrated, "in miniature", by a successful discussion:

> We are continually shaping a common perspective when we speak a common language and so are active participants in the communality of our experience of the world. Experiences of resistance or opposition bear witness to this, for example, in discussion. Discussion bears fruit when a common language is found. Then the participants part from one another as changed beings. The

> individual perspectives with which they entered upon discussion have been transformed, and so they are transformed themselves. This, then, is a kind of progress — not the progress proper to research in regard to which one cannot fall behind but a progress that always must be renewed in the effort of our living (Gadamer 1981: 110-111).

The traces of Hegel's dialectics are quite evident in this spiral progress. Like in Hegel, one of the conditions (and results) of such a progress is an ever increasing consciousness, conceived by Gadamer as a self-critical awareness of the historicity — hence, finitude but openness, limitation but changeability — of the different horizons involved in understanding. Different, but not entirely alien. Another condition for such a progress is some amount of shared common ground or "commonality of understanding". This is provided, in part, by the commonality of language, in part by the inner dynamics of the games — especially of dialogue[10] — we are involved in, and mainly by our belonging to a (common, though ever changing) 'tradition'. Historical-effective consciousness does not purport to free us from the bounds of 'tradition' — an impossible task — but rather to make us aware of it and, thus, to put us in a position to climb up the spiral of understanding, through a full exploitation of the "hermeneutic experience".

Since our aim is not to provide an exegesis of philosophical hermeneutics, we have to content ourselves here with this admittedly sketchy exposition of some of its key notions, and proceed to our comparative task. Pragmatics too purports to explain "what always happens" in the process of interpretation. In some respects, its account is similar to that of hermeneutics. For example, it also stresses the fallible or tentative character of every pragmatic interpretation: since no interpreter has direct access to the speaker's meaning, its determination is always a matter of guesswork, and its results are always revisable in the light of further evidence. Likewise, it assumes that some amount of shared background is necessary for a successful interpretation, including (some) obedience to the rules of language and of language use (e.g., dialogical or conversational maxims), a mutual presumption of rationality (e.g., in the form of cooperation and coherence), and partly overlapping contexts. Finally, in my opinion, pragmatic interpretation always involves a second-order critical or reflective step (even when we are not aware of it), in so far as it requires asking whether there are reasons *not* to accept a given 'transparent' interpretation of an utterance (or text) as its 'correct' interpretation in the light of contextual information (see Dascal

1983: 138ff.) — and this is comparable, up to a point, to the role hermeneutics assigns to 'historical-effective consciousness'.

In spite of these similarities, however, there are at least two quite significant differences. One of them has to do with the general scope of the claims put forth. It is as if each pragmatic principle had, for (philosophical) hermeneutics, an additional, metaphysical import, whereby its meaning is — to some extent — tilted. I will return to this issue in section 5 below.

The other is more specific, though it also illustrates the former kind of difference. Philosophical hermeneutics rejects wholesale the intentional-psychological vocabulary of earlier hermeneutics as inadequate "to what is most essential to the process of understanding to the extent that it is a process of communication" (Gadamer 1981: 110). This is in line both with the anti-psychologism it inherited from phenomenology and with its endeavor to deny any basic ontological status to the subject (and thereby to the subject-object distinction). As a result, it feels entitled to pursue its search for the motivational factors that influence understanding well beyond the explicit intentional level of communicative exchanges. Not only "the question" in the light of which an utterance has to be understood may legitimately be found well beyond anything the utterer might have in mind, but also the interpreter — in raising his 'historical-effective consciousness' — should inquire into his own possibly unconscious motives for, say, being interested in that utterance at all (cf. Gadamer 1981: 106). Accordingly, the "hermeneutic experience" encompasses indiscriminately a continuum of factors, ranging from the depths of psychoanalytical interpretation,[11] through all-embracing historical and cultural considerations, up to the communicative intentions of speakers, authors, and interpreters (see Chapters 9 and 30). The latter not only do not occupy any special position in the account of the process of understanding, but are somehow treated as nearly epiphenomena. Furthermore, though the text or linguistic object is, as we have seen, considered the starting point of the interpretation process, it hardly plays a distinctive or focal role in that process, becoming just another element in the continuum of understanding.

Pragmatics, on the contrary, at least as I see it, claims that it is impossible to account for understanding in communication without carefully discriminating between the contributions of the different factors involved. It stresses the fact that communication is a purposive and rule-governed activity. Whatever the possibly constitutive role of the interpreter in construing the meaning of an utterance, a communicative act is, first and foremost, an act of generat-

ing meaning *by the speaker* (see Chapter 1), and success in communication cannot be entirely detached from the interpreter's ability to somehow recover that meaning. The interpreter has, so to speak, a primary 'duty to understand' the speaker's meaning, intentionally communicated to him by the speaker (cf. Chapter 4). This meaning, as we have seen, need not coincide with the 'literal meaning' of the sentence uttered nor with the 'utterance meaning' it conveys in the context of utterance. But, in order to be communicable, it must be somehow 'derivable' from sentence and utterance meaning (which can be determined by applying the semantic and syntactic rules of the language) via a set of principles of language use shared by the interlocutors. Such a derivation is neither a deduction nor an induction, but rather an *abductive* process of discovery, and the principles that guide it are not algorithmic but heuristic (cf. Dascal 1983: 142ff.) — and this is what explains the fallibility of pragmatic interpretation. On the other hand, pragmatic interpretation leaves to other disciplines (e.g., psychoanalysis) the exploration of unconscious motives and contents that are certainly operative in communicative exchanges. The reason is that they function as causes rather than as reasons (as the communicative intentions do) and therefore require completely different methods and principles of explanation. Moreover, such further interpretations of a communicative act are not only distinguishable from its pragmatic interpretation, but ultimately rest upon the latter. Thus, a joke can be psychoanalytically interpreted as satisfying certain repressed desires, but this is only possible because joke-teller and listener are able to understand, at a communicative level (i.e., with the help of pragmatic principles), the interplay of implicit and explicit meanings that lead to the punch line (cf. Chapter 16). To try to explain communicative exchanges by appealing directly to the historic-cultural context and to unconscious interests, while overlooking or minimizing the role of the communicative intentions of the participants, is like to try to explain John's influenza in terms of cosmic forces while overlooking the tiny virus in his blood. Perhaps there is room to inquire about the cosmic origins of the virus and of John, as well as about what made possible their encounter. But such an inquiry only makes sense once one has recognized the direct causal relation between the virus and John's disease and its primary role in the explanation of that disease. Second-order motivational, historic-cultural, functional or causal explanations may help to account for the intentions themselves that are operative in a communicative exchange, but they are parasitic upon the proper identification of such intentions and their primary and specific role in any account of communicative behavior.

5. The universality of hermeneutic and pragmatic interpretation

In Gadamer's hands, hermeneutics has been transformed from a sub-discipline of the humanities concerned with the techniques of interpretation of theological and classical texts ('classical' hermeneutics), and from the distinctive method of the *Geisteswissenschaften* ('romantic' hermeneutics) into a reflection on the fundamental and universal conditions of experience. Unlike Schleiermacher, who "defined hermeneutics as the art of avoiding misunderstanding ... by controlled, methodical considerations" (Gadamer 1976: 7), Gadamer claims that both misunderstanding and understanding *qua* manifest phenomena are only possible against the background of a deeper layer of common understanding (*Verständigung*) or common accord (*Einverständnis*).[12] The task of hermeneutics is to point out that certain manifest forms of consciousness — e.g., aesthetic, historical, hermeneutical (in the narrow sense) and scientific — capture only parts of our experience in the face of certain 'objects' (e.g., works of art, historical events, texts, scientific experiments; cf. Gadamer 1976: 39ff.). The reason for that is that such forms of consciousness, being 'methodical', are essentially reductive, suppressing those aspects of the experience that do not fall within their methodical scope. The true hermeneutical method — which, of course, is not really a method since it cannot consist in a set of explicit and formal rules — seeks to bring out of the dark (Gadamer 1976: 10) these aspects of experience, thereby revealing the essential condition for the exercise of any limited form of consciousness, in any field of experience. What is thus revealed is the omnipresence of some prior understanding as a precondition for any further understanding. Understanding, therefore, must be perceived as the primary mode of our being-in-the-world. At any given point in history, we are already equipped with some "initial schematization for all our possibilities of knowing", provided essentially by language, a fact that is expressed by the phrase "the linguistic constitution of the world" (Gadamer 1976: 13).[13]

By altogether different routes, devoid of metaphysical overtones,[14] pragmatics too has some claim to universality, which it is worthwhile to compare to that of philosophical hermeneutics. A first route — to which I object — to the universalization of pragmatic interpretation has been taken by some psychologists who have argued that, in an interactive situation involving at least two human agents "it is impossible not to communicate".[15] In such a situation, every behavior (be it 'active' or 'passive') has "message value" and can, there-

fore, be interpreted by the other agents present, regardless of its being or not intentional and thus 'communicative' in a strict sense. Though restricted to the field of human events, this alleged universality of interpretation resembles the one posited by hermeneutics in that it assumes a continuum of interpretational procedures applicable to intentional and non-intentional 'communication' alike, and in that it constitutes a sort of pre-understanding characteristic of all interactive situations.[16]

Another way in which pragmatics can aspire to universality is this. As the theory of use of language (and other semiotic systems), it need not be restricted — as it has traditionally been — to an investigation of the communication or social use of language. For language has also non-communicative uses, e.g., those in which it is somehow involved in cognitive processes not directly geared to communication, such as problem-solving, dreaming, perceiving, etc. Such uses are sufficiently important to deserve to be investigated on their own, by a sub-discipline of pragmatics, which I have proposed to call 'psychopragmatics' (in contradistinction to 'sociopragmatics'; cf. Dascal 1983: 42-52 and Chapter 16). Without going as far as claiming — as some have done — that all thought is mediated by language, it is hard to overestimate the role played by linguistic factors in all thought processes. Therefore, in so far as our dealings with the world always involve some sort of cognitive process, in which, in turn, language plays some role, it is justifiable to speak of a "linguistic constitution of the world", provided this phrase is understood non-metaphysically. It is remarkable that, in its eagerness to defend the all-importance of the linguistic dimension of our life, hermeneutics has taken as its sole starting point the social uses of language, stressing therefore communality, sharing, intersubjectivity, being, understanding (*Verständigung*), etc. As far as I can see, it has not considered the possibility that such sociopragmatic constraints on *understanding* need not be those that rule our mental uses of language, in so far as the latter are not communication-oriented. The investigation of the possibly quite different kinds of constraints on language use in cognitive as well as in other mental processes by psychopragmatics may eventually lead, therefore, to a radically new understanding of the hermeneutic diagnosis of the significance of language for our lives.

In spite of such presumably far-reaching implications, pragmatics cultivates a self-image of a quasi-empirical, down-to-earth discipline, eager to apply general principles to the analysis of concrete and unsophisticated communicative episodes. The fact that it has been practiced by philosophers

notwithstanding, it is closely associated with such disciplines as linguistics, psychology, and the ethnography of communication. Philosophical hermeneutics, on the other hand, is essentially philosophical. It is concerned with a kind of Kantian *a priori* elucidation of the conditions of all experience, and it does not refrain from making ontological claims. Though at some points apparently referring to the same kinds of phenomena, the two disciplines seem to be motivated by different questions, which in turn yield claims with different scope, precision, and applicability. In principle, they might be viewed as complementary rather than as competing disciplines. A precondition for this is an attempt to reconcile the quite divergent vocabularies employed by the two disciplines.

If the present hermeneutic exercise by a pragmaticist trying to reach some understanding of hermeneutics in terms of his own rather powerful set of prejudices has contributed to this, it has achieved one of its purposes. It certainly has contributed to reduce the aura of mystery hermeneutic texts had for me before I engaged in this undertaking. Perhaps this has been achieved by suppressing — in the eyes of some — precisely that which is appealing, deep, and really important in hermeneutics. But then, in so far as such other aspects of hermeneutics remain so far hermetic for me (and for many others), they lie beyond my (admittedly limited) horizon. Fortunately, such a horizon is limited but not closed, and can still change. At any rate, maybe what is nevertheless rescued by my exercise is worthwhile enough, even when translated into the mundane and non-mysterious jargon of pragmatics.

Notes

1. In fact, some pragmatic effects, such as conversational implicatures, are claimed to be 'non-detachable', i.e., to be conveyed by any expression that is semantically equivalent to the expression actually used (Grice 1975). On the difficulty of applying this criterion of non-detachability, see Sadock (1978).

2. See Searle 1969:20 and Dascal 1983:85-91.

3. The role of literal or conventional meaning has been questioned recently by some psychologists (e.g., Gibbs 1984). For a critical assessment of their arguments, see Chapter 26).

4. In the case of a controversy, it is possible to characterize a notion of a 'controversy's demand' (parallel to that of 'conversational demand'), in the light of which, at each point of the controversy, a text is assessed as being either a satisfactory reply to preceding

criticism or not (see Chapter 13). I have examined the controversy between Arnauld and Malebranche on the nature of ideas in terms of such pragmatic concepts (Dascal 1990c). For further examples of a pragmatic-rhetorical analysis of controversies and for a typology thereof, see Dascal (1998a), Cremaschi and Dascal (1998), Dascal and Cremaschi (1999). Of course, all such assessments by the participants themselves as well as by observers is 'subjective' in that it depends on how they define the 'controversy's demand' at each point. It turns out that an enormous amount of time and energy in controversies is spent in reciprocal allegations of misunderstanding, that stem from different definitions of what is at stake at each point.

5. For a criticism of the alleged 'objectivity' of Popper's 'problem situations' from a hermeneutical point of view, see Böhler (1985: 149ff.).

6. On the "central position of the dialogue in the theory of hermeneutics" see Gadamer (1981: 45ff.) and Bernstein (1983: 161ff). On the definition of thought itself as "the play of statement and counterstatement ... in the inner dialogue of the soul with itself", see Gadamer (1976: 66) and Gadamer (1980: *passim*).

7. "Prejudices are not necessarily unjustified and erroneous, so that they inevitably distort the truth. In fact, the historicity of our existence entails that prejudices, in the literal sense of the word, constitute the initial directedness of our whole ability to experience. Prejudices are biases of our openness to the world. They are simply conditions whereby we experience something - whereby what we encounter says something to us" (Gadamer 1976: 9).

8. See Chapter 8a. See also Clark and Carlson (1981) and Parret (1985).

9. Bernstein (1983: 132) quotes the following passage of Kuhn illustrating this (standard) version of the circle: "When reading the works of an important thinker, look first for the apparent absurdities in the text and ask yourself how a sensible person could have written them. When you find an answer, I continue, when those passages make sense, then you may find that more central passages, ones you previously thought you understood, have changed their meaning". Notice that, implicit in this version, is an assumption of rationality or coherence of the author (or text), which is akin to what authors such as David Lewis and Donald Davidson have called the 'principle of charity' (see Chapters 30 and 15a,b). Kuhn's claim that one is led to a reinterpretation of the whole text by trying to make sense of its apparent 'absurdities' parallels the idea that what triggers a search for an alternative pragmatic interpretation of an utterance is the detection of a 'mismatch' between its ostensive utterance meaning and the context.

10. "When one enters into dialogue with another person and then is carried along further by the dialogue, it is no longer the will of the individual person, holding itself back or exposing itself, that is determinative. Rather, the law of the subject matter is at issue in the dialogue and elicits statement and counterstatement and in the end plays them into each other" (Gadamer 1976: 66).

11. "...the unconscious motive does not represent a clear and fully articulable boundary for hermeneutical theory: it falls within the larger perimeter of hermeneutics ... in psychotherapy hermeneutics and the circle of language that is closed in dialogue are central"

(Gadamer 1976:41). "The task of understanding is not merely that of clarifying the deepest unconscious grounds motivating our interest but above all that of understanding and explicating them in the direction and limits indicated by our hermeneutic interest" (Gadamer 1981:108). "...the unconscious, in the sense of what is implicit to our direct awareness, is the normal object of our hermeneutic concern" (109). The unconscious is normally accessible to us, and requires psychoanalytic intervention only when such accessibility or "balance between our unconscious drives and our conscious human motivations and decisions" is lost. Psychoanalysis then helps one to clarify "the background of one's own unconscious — with the goal of regaining what one had lost: the equilibrium between one's own nature and the awareness and language shared by all of us" (ibid.).

12. Consider also: "...any understanding of another's meaning, or that of a text, is encompassed by a context of mutual agreement, despite all possible miscomprehensions" (Gadamer 1981:136). I must confess that, like Schleiermacher and unlike Gadamer, I tend to consider misunderstanding as having a fundamental role in the process of interpretation (cf. Chapter 14b). In this respect, pragmatic interpretation is, in my view, quite close to what has been called the 'hermeneutics of suspicion'.

13. Even the child cannot be said to begin in a languageless state: "What sort of folly is it to say that a child speaks a 'first' word. What kind of madness is it to want to discover the original language of humanity by having children grow up in hermetic isolation from human speaking... What is mad about such ideas is that they want to suspend in some artificial way our very enclosedness in the linguistic world in which we live" (Gadamer 1976:63).

14. And for good reason, since pragmatics is an off-shot of analytic philosophy and Peirce's pragmatism, i.e., of traditions that were either completely anti-metaphysical or else against traditional forms of metaphysics. This should be contrasted with Heidegger's explicit purpose of *reviving* metaphysics, albeit on a new basis.

15. See Watzlawick et al. (1967:48). For criticism, see Dascal (1983:43) and Chapter 4.

16. The principle that "it is impossible not to communicate" illustrates an interesting kind of modal interpretative assumption: if some behavior *can* have "message value", then it is plausible to assume it *does* actually have it. The effect of a *presumptive* assumption of this kind is to introduce an asymmetry regarding the burden of proof: whoever wishes to deny that the behavior has a (certain) message value must produce reasons to that effect. I think presumptions of this kind are operative also in the interpretation of intentional communicative actions, where they may explain — among other things — the focal role of the 'literal meaning' in pragmatic interpretation (see Chapter 26), as well as in much of the hermeneutical experience of 'pre-judgment' and 'pre-understanding'.

Chapter 30

The limits of interpretation

Two books are published at about the same time. They bear exactly the same title. Their authors are apparently unaware of each other. Is this a miraculous coincidence, an omen? May it be that our wanderings through the dreadful galleries of Borges's "Biblioteca de Babel" have led us to find two variants of the same book, where only the author's name is changed (Borges 1974: 465-471)? Are we perhaps approaching the limits of what Leibniz, long before Borges, called 'L'horizon de la doctrine humaine', that moment in time when hardly anything new can be written because most of the combinations of letters have already been produced (Leibniz 1991)?[1] Or is this surprising fact simply a manifestation of the *Zeitgeist*, of that mysterious socio-historical force that pushes certain topics and concepts toward the focus of a generation's attention? Or else is it merely a matter of conceptual fashion, the not less mysterious phenomenon that raises some terms to the ephemeral status of 'celebrities' among intellectuals, only to let them ebb into oblivion soon thereafter?[2]

What have we been doing in these opening remarks? Having noticed some 'unusual' fact, we proceeded immediately to look for its 'meaning', i.e., to 'interpret' it. In so doing, we raised a number of more — or less — far-fetched *interpretive hypotheses*. Our imagination seems to be, at least at first, unbounded both in the nature of the hypotheses and in the resources it employs in engendering them. "Anything goes" — to use Feyerabend's (1975) anti-methodological slogan — seems to be the rule. Our fears, our longings, our secret beliefs, our erudition — anything that might possibly (in a very broad sense of 'possibility') account for the observed fact, i.e., bring it into the realm of the familiar, thus reducing or eliminating altogether its 'problematic' or 'unusual' character — are employed in interpretation.

Notice that we usually resist the null hypothesis, namely, the assumption that the fact examined simply *lacks* any meaning. Admitting meaninglessness seems to be an avowal of failure in finding meaning, failure in *our* interpretive efforts. We simply have not tried hard enough. That is to say, we operate

according to a *presumption* that there is always some meaning to be found *there*. This is our operational *default* hypothesis. The null hypothesis is to be adopted only *after all* — or most — serious attempts to find meaning fail. In this respect, we approach events according to an overarching *Principle of Charity*, namely the assumption that meaningfulness is the rule and meaninglessness, the exception. Applied to human behavior, this principle reads: admit stupidity, ignorance, irrationality, incoherence, etc. — in short, meaninglessness — *only if* there is no way to interpret a given behavior as wise, well-informed, rational, coherent, etc. (Davidson 1973; Lewis 1974; see also Chapter 15).

Our relentless hunt for 'meaning' is, no doubt, a significant part of our longing for a secure ground — a *playground*, we might say — where we know the rules of the game, i.e., where no surprises (except for those oxymoronically permitted by the rules and expected within the game) can arise. Interpreting is the activity whereby we seek to reach this secure ground, by discovering (or inventing) the pattern of regularities that fits where there was at first a 'surprise'.

To be sure, were we to adopt some of the interpretations proposed above, further perplexities might arise, for the discovered (or invented) pattern might itself be rather problematic: Is there in fact a limiting horizon of human knowledge and how is it to be conceived? How do such things as the *Zeitgeist* or fashion operate? But these perplexities belong to the next move in the endless interpretive game. Engaging in them, i.e., questioning our former interpretations, we are no longer interpreting the initial fact, but rather the proposed interpretations themselves. We are *meta*-interpreting. The first law of interpretive activity is probably this: "Interpretation breeds meta-interpretation". Iterated, this law merely reiterates the endlessness of the game: "Meta-interpretation leads to meta-meta-interpretation", and so on.[3] This, in turn, shows how ephemeral is the security we may achieve through our quest of interpretation. And yet, we do not give up. It so happens that we *are* interpreting animals, meaning hunters. Apparently, there is nothing we can do about it.[4]

Or perhaps there is. Perhaps we can try to interpret interpretation itself. To do so, we must first perceive this notion or activity as 'problematic', 'unusual', 'puzzling', for if we took it as unproblematic we would hardly feel the need to go beyond our usual way of understanding it. In fact, in our daily life we hardly question the validity of our interpretations, unless forced to do

so. After ordering coffee, we take the cup containing the brownish liquid served to us by the waiter as a cup of coffee. Even if it looks or tastes bizarre, we tend to persist in our first interpretation ("it's perhaps an unfamiliar brand of coffee" or "maybe the cold I have interferes with my tasting ability" — we may say to ourselves). That is to say, we usually feel confident in the objectivity and accuracy of our interpretations and try to uphold them in the face of counter-evidence. Of course, when the pressure of counter-evidence grows (e.g., if the person we interpreted as being a waiter begins to laugh and tells us: "You are on Candid Camera!"), we are forced to look for alternative interpretations. But this does not necessarily lead us to question the transparency of the notion of interpretation itself. We need to trust this notion in order to be able to carry on our daily activities — professionally or otherwise.

Nevertheless, some disciplines, where the notion of interpretation looms large, have questioned its transparency. One of the traditional maxims of jurisprudence, for example, says that *clara non sunt interpretanda*.[5] But jurists never included the notion of interpretation itself among the *clara* that are not to be interpreted, and philosophers of law, especially in this century, have devoted great effort to clarify this notion (see, for example, Dworkin 1986). Psychoanalysts too, ever since Freud introduced this notion as a term of art, never ceased to modify it and to try to improve its interpretation. In medicine, the theory of 'semeiology' investigates the ways in which symptoms are to be interpreted; it is accepted practice nowadays to seek a 'second opinion', i.e., to admit the possibility of different interpretations of the same configuration of symptoms — at least when major ailments are in question. It is only for the 'common man', perhaps, that interpretation is so obvious that s/he is rarely aware of doing it. But it is up to philosophers — as Wittgenstein insisted — to see and to show what is problematic in the familiar, which covers those aspects of things that are most important for us (Wittgenstein 1958). Let us assume that we have discharged this obligation in the first paragraphs of this essay, where we showed how puzzling our relentless (and, to some extent hopeless) search for (secure) interpretations is.

The next thing we must do in interpreting interpretation is to raise a number of interpretive hypotheses about this notion, and then — eventually — to meta-interpret them, by discussing the puzzles they raise. It is here that the two books mentioned at the beginning acquire a more substantive role. For their shared title is — what a coincidence! — the same as the title of this essay: *The Limits of Interpretation*. One is by a psychotherapist — Peter Lomas

(1990); the other, by a semiotician, historian of ideas, and best-selling author — Umberto Eco (1990).

If you read these two books you are immediately reassured: they do not lend any support for the Babylon Library hypothesis. In fact, although they share their title, no line in the two books is identical (as far as we could check), and the theses they defend are in fact quite opposed. This reassurance, however, raises another puzzle: how can two books holding opposite views bear *the same title*? After all, by conventional wisdom, book titles are suppose (or at least hint at) book content. If you buy, say, Marguerite Duras' *L'Amante Anglaise*, you expect to read something about the love life of some English woman. When you discover, after going through more than half of the book, that it deals with an abhorrent murder, where no love nor English women are involved, you begin to look for an explanation, a 'meaning', for this *mismatch* between the title and the contents. You may rest content with saying that this is just another gimmick of the Nouveau Roman authors to puzzle their readers or to attract attention. But if you look further, you discover some *clues* as to how to interpret the title in connection with the contents. To make a long story short,[6] Claire, the murderer, often misspells certain words; she is interested in plants, especially in "menthe" (mint), and she grows mint "en glaise" (in potter's clay). So, the 'real' title of the book — one might say — is "La menthe en glaise" (The mint in potter's clay) and the actual title is a (deliberate, of course) misspelling of that. Does this mean that the book is about mint cultivation? Certainly not. The book is, broadly speaking, about misspelling: about the fact that different persons view the same event (the murder) along completely different lines.

Surprisingly, it turns out that the book is about our topic: interpretation! Well, perhaps not so surprisingly: every book has to do with interpretation, for every book offers an interpretation of experience, events, theories, concepts, behavior, or whatever. In this sense, from every book we can learn something about interpretation. Fortunately, for our purposes here, only some books focus on interpretation itself; only these are strictly *about* interpretation; and we will be directly concerned here mainly with two of them, those that bear the title of this essay.

Before we leave — for the time being — this question of titles, it is worthwhile to consider another example. For several decades since it was published in 1876, Lewis Carroll's nonsense ballad *The Hunting of the Snark* was the object of attempts at interpretation by enthralled readers of all ages,

including philosophers.[7] Unlike Duras's title, which is perfectly meaningful, Carroll's title contains a nonsense word, 'Snark', which immediately sparks a search for its meaning, as well as a search for an allegorical interpretation of the whole poem. Yet, the rest of the title makes perfect sense; it also fits the contents of the ballad, which indeed 'describes' a hunting expedition; furthermore, it can be translated into other languages without any problem.[8] Contrast this with the difficulty of translating the title *L'Amante Anglaise*. Neither a literally correct translation (say, "The English Lover") nor a translation that reproduces what we called the 'real' title (say, "The Mint in Potter's Clay") would be appropriate.[9] Let us bear in mind the different interpretive problems these two titles raise, for further consideration below.

What this long detour teaches us is that, unfortunately perhaps, titles cannot be taken at face value. They too have to be interpreted. Clearly, for Lomas and for Eco the descriptive phrase 'the limits of interpretation' must have different interpretations. Maybe the difference can be described as follows. When you speak of 'the limits of *x*', you consider certain boundaries that surround *x* and separate it from other things. Now, you may look at these boundaries either from the inside or from the outside, and you may feel that they are either too narrow or too broad, regarding *x* itself or (some of) *x*'s neighbors. Both Lomas and Eco argue that the boundaries of interpretation have not been so far clearly determined. Both contend that, as a result, interpretation tends to overflow its natural boundaries, invading their neighbors' territory. Their title shares, therefore, the reading: "The limits of interpretation must be determined in order to stop its expansionism". But they differ as to what are the proper limits to set for interpretation, as to how broad its territory should be, and as to who are the threatened neighbors.

For Lomas the psychotherapist, interpretation, as a technique derived from the perception of psychotherapy as a 'talking cure' has a very limited scope, for it addresses only those aspects of human experience that can be verbalized, that can be represented by propositional knowledge. It leaves untouched a vast area of experience simply because it cannot cover it. This area includes, for example, the therapist's direct, emotional and spontaneous relationship with the patient. Says Lomas:

> ... the consulting room contains two human beings who have strong feelings about each other and ... the practitioner needs to be more than an interpreting machine ... (Lomas 1990: 5).

> Individual psychotherapy should, I believe, concern itself much more than it does with the factors in the partnership that engender mutual warmth, respect and trust (Lomas 1990: 148).

These and similar phenomena are the neighbors threatened by the belief that interpretation covers everything there is to cover in psychotherapy. Interpretation cannot take into account these aspects of the interaction because it concentrates on the cognitive/intellectual level, and treats all the rest — when it acknowledges its existence at all — as grist for its mill:

> ... interpretation became the centre-piece of all the interaction and established the 'correct' manner in which therapy should be conducted. It was not merely that there was a focus on talking; there was a focus on a certain kind of talking. The words of the patient were seen as symptoms of disease offered up for inspection; the words of the analyst were diagnostic interpretations (Lomas 1990: 5).

For Eco, the semiotician and literary critic, there is no doubt that every text (or utterance) allows for a wide range of possible interpretations. And yet, against the hermeneuticists and deconstructionists who argue that, in fact, a text has no meaning *per se*, that *all* its meaning is the result of the creative interpretive activity of its (different) readers, Eco wants to erect a barrier. Linguistic expressions have a 'literal meaning' by virtue of the semantic rules of the language to which they belong. This literal meaning is not something that the interpreter creates nor something that s/he can ignore entirely in his/her interpretation. After all, nobody in his sane mind can interpret an utterance of the sentence "Napoleon lost the battle of Waterloo" as meaning "I ate twenty-five apples yesterday". In a recent interview, Eco says:

> To put the whole thing in a rude way, I still believe that there is a literal level in language, a zero degree. Interpretation starts from that level and cannot ignore it. Can you read *Finnegan's Wake* as a free interpretation of *Gone with the Wind*? If the answer is, "No" (and it is "No" — don't be silly), this means that some interpretations of a text simply cannot be accepted as an interpretation of *that* text (Eco 1993).

Knowing the literal meaning is certainly not sufficient for interpreting an utterance, for we rely on countless contextual elements to convey our meanings. Often — in fact, more often than not — we use linguistic expressions in non-literal ways, but even then the interpreter is not free to bestow on the expression just *any* interpretation s/he wants. In other words, "every act of interpretation involve[s] both freedom and fidelity" (ibid.). So, Eco is granting

'interpretation' a lot of leeway, a large territory, but at the same time he is trying to preserve a small, interpretation-free area for literal meaning, i.e., for semantics.[10]

Clearly, the threatened neighbors of interpretation's expansionism according to Eco and Lomas do not overlap. Rather, they stand at opposite sides, so to speak, of the territory of interpretation.

Lomas would perhaps even include semantics, with its propositions, truth-conditions, rules, etc. — all of which are 'cognitive' — within the scope of the criticism he makes of the limitations of the 'talking cure'. And Eco would reject any offer to colonize his Literal Meaning with the 'experiential' animals of Lomas' zoo, since this would amount to importing into this well-ordered domain the vagueness, indefiniteness, unpredictability, etc. that are typical of the threatening strategies of unbounded 'interpretation'.[11]

No wonder that Eco's and Lomas' positions do not overlap. After all — you might argue — the one is talking about psychotherapeutic interpretation and the other about linguistic and literary interpretation — entirely different things. Different, but not *entirely* different, i.e., totally unrelated. In our endeavor to interpret we have set as our task to interpret interpretation, not this or that kind thereof. We may end up with distinctions of kinds of interpretation, as part of the fulfilment of our task, but we cannot assume them from the start. Very often indeed, interpreting *x* is providing a chart of a (semantic) field where *x* is related to cognate, superordinate, and subordinate notions or phenomena.[12] The payoff of what we have done so far is indeed a preliminary chart, where, putting Lomas and Eco together, we see 'interpretation' as having one lower boundary (semantics) and one upper boundary (experiential aspects of human interaction). Before we look further into the territory to which interpretation is to be confined according to our two authors, let us examine a bit more the nature of these two neighbors.

Semantics, as understood by Eco and many others, is characterized by its rule-governed, systematic nature. The notion of 'code' looms large in this characterization. A code is a set of correspondences between signs and meanings (semantic rules). Its application is context-free. It requires only the possession of the code's 'key'. Whatever is not accountable for by the rules of the code is 'noise', i.e., nonsense. One may stretch the term 'interpretation' and speak of 'semantic interpretation' — in the way formal semanticists and logicians do — as referring to the application of semantic rules in order to assign a meaning to a sign or vice-versa. However, as already pointed out, this

is grossly insufficient for accounting for human communication. A model of interpretation based exclusively or mainly on the notion of semantic interpretation can be appropriately described as 'cryptographic': given a code and its key, messages are *encoded* at one end and *decoded* at the other by whoever possesses the key; the procedure is automatic and can be performed by a machine or algorithm.[13] Lomas' charge that the analyst sometimes behaves as an 'interpretation-machine' suggests that he is attributing to analytic interpretation this cryptographic character, even though the codes and keys the analyst uses are 'deeper' than the mundane semantic codes we all use.

The experiential domain, as characterized by Lomas, although displaying some regularities, is not rule-governed nor necessarily systematic. It has to do with the fluidity of life (the *Lebenswelt*), with the phenomenological *qualia* of experience, with the singularity of events in general and of interactive encounters in particular, with spontaneity, emotions, compassion and total involvement. Consider this example of Lomas' response to a patient's request to go to the lavatory, upon her arrival:

> ... she said, 'May I use your loo?'. 'Yes. Of course', I replied. The hesitancy with which she asked the question prompted me to emphasize my answer: 'Yes. *Of course*'. I felt I needed to convey to her: 'You do not need to ask with such hesitancy. You are welcome to use the loo. I do not regard your request as unusual or disturbing in any way' ... This was not a conscious decision on my part and I can only guess at my reasons for the silence on the matter. ... My answer was designed to enable someone, very unsure of herself, to feel that her behaviour was acceptable (Lomas 1990: 52-53).

Interpretation — in the sense criticized by Lomas — would overlook this direct personal concern, preoccupied as it is with discerning 'the deeper meaning' of a patient's behavior:

> I could later have made what is commonly called an interpretation. For instance, I could have said, 'I notice that during sessions you are at pains not to be a nuisance to me. You never show any aggression, you speak little and quietly, you try to be 'good'. May it be that in going to the loo just before the session you try to get rid of the messy, dirty, unacceptable bits of yourself in case they emerge in some form during the session?' ... [Such an] interpretation might have made her feel criticized. She may have then thought, 'He doesn't think I should have used his loo'; or, at a deeper level, 'He doesn't like my body; he doesn't like me' (ibid.).

Interpretation cannot capture the experiential aspects of interpersonal relations because of the inherent limitations of its medium. These aspects are, for

the most part, *in*articulate, perhaps even necessarily so, in which case they belong to the domain of the ineffable. Attempts to articulate them (e.g., through verbalization or even silent conceptualization) necessarily misrepresent — and therefore miss — its most significant features:

> One way of describing the difference between verbal interpretations and overall response is to say that in the latter the therapist enters the field of imaginative, non-discursive function. In Heaton's view, the main task of therapy is to show rather than say, to reveal to the patient the extent to which words are inadequate as a medium for living (Lomas 1990: 55).[14]

Not even Freud's notion of 'working through' — "a process by means of which the analyst repeats the interpretation and reveals how it may be recognized in different contexts" (Lomas 1990: 56) — is sufficient because

> the implication of the concept is that change occurs simply by means of increasingly convincing intellectual presentations. This omits the fact that the force required to make a difficult change often derives from a *passionate* experience between therapist and patient (ibid.).

Lomas' conception of what is missed by 'interpretation' calls to mind a number of related concepts from philosophy and other areas. To name but a few: *knowing how*, rather than *knowing that*, is what the patient should acquire;[15] for this purpose, *showing*, not *saying* is more relevant, since the patient needs the therapist more *as a model* than *as an interpreter* (cf. Wittgenstein 1963); both patient and therapist must display *intuition and not merely intelligence* in order to capture the fleeting aspects of experience (Bergson 1985: 178ff.); in any interpersonal interaction the *inarticulate background* (Searle 1980), the *implicit*, is as relevant (if not more) for understanding as the *articulate* and *explicit* (see Dascal 1983: 89; see also Chapters 24 and 25); it is important to *grasp* the other's mood and (communicative) mode in order to be able to *comprehend* his/her messages (see Chapter 4). In its appeal to the direct, unmediated, spontaneous, total, and inarticulate form of understanding, Lomas' ideal model comes close to the Buberian ideal of 'true dialogue' between an 'I' and a 'Thou' on equal footing, none of which treats the other as an object ('It'), but rather as a full person (Buber 1958; see also Stewart 1985). The empathy and compassion emphasized in this model amounts to an *overarching Principle of Charity*, that encompasses much more than the philosophical conception of interpretive charity, which requires only that the

other's behavior be interpreted so as to maximize the other's rationality (see Chapters 15a and 29).

Finally, in emphasizing the interactive character of the therapeutic process and the therapist's active and total participation in the process rather than his/her role as a detached, disembodied and presumably neutral and objective interpreter, Lomas' suggestions lead to the *hermeneutic model* of interpretation (see Chapters 9 and 29). According to this model, meaning does not exist prior to the act of interpretation, but is created in that very act, through a 'fusion of horizons' between interpreter and text (in this case, therapist and patient). From this model it follows that each 'interpretation' is unique, being the result of an encounter between the horizons of two unique individuals in a unique occasion. This means that different therapists will produce different 'interpretations' of what seems to be 'the same' behavior of a given patient. The alleged scientific objectivity of analytic interpretation is thus revealed as a myth:

> Psychoanalytic 'case-histories' are a myth and a delusion. What goes on in private between analyst and patient is 'privileged': because of their increasing understanding of each other, because of the nuances, intonations and shared associations, a kind of shorthand develops, which is quite bewildering to an outsider. Tape-recording the session is of little benefit, as the machine records the words but not the unspoken thoughts (Lomas 1990: 28).

Not surprisingly, each of the neighbors occasionally tries to encroach on the tiny territory left for 'interpretation'. The cryptographic model does so by multiplying 'codes' and rules: stylistic code, politeness code, non-verbal codes, fashion code, etc. In psychotherapy, it does so, for instance, by speaking of a 'language of dreams' or a fixed set of oneiric symbols, or else by providing a set of rigid rules for the therapeutic procedure and a preferred mode of explanation. To have a 'theory' and a theoretical vocabulary that one *must* apply, "a code-breaking language, unavailable to the less-initiated patient" (Lomas 1990: 45), is a form of allegiance to the cryptographic model. But, in the case of psychoanalytic theory, it is also a form of allegiance to another model of interpretation, which may be called *causal*. On this model, one disregards the speaker's (or agent's) conscious *intentions* and looks rather for the causal (unconscious) mechanisms that underlie such a behavior. The analyst is a 'scientist' that knows the causal laws of human behavior and possesses a method to elicit the relevant causes in any given case. He is therefore in a privileged position vis-à-vis the patient to provide interpretations, i.e., *expla-*

nations.[16] The patient's pre-analytic conscious understandings of his/her own intentions are viewed as mere 'rationalizations' for the underlying causes, rather than the true reasons for action. Accordingly, they function as *symptoms*, and are to be interpreted as such. Viewed in this way, analytic interpretation is profoundly disrespectful of the person, since it deconstructs the person's self-image as a conscious, responsible agent, and argues for the irrelevance of a significant component of the person's life.

The experiential model, on the other hand, may attempt to grab portions of the territory of 'interpretation' by arguing that interpretation is not at all necessary in many cases, i.e., that it can be bypassed by other, more important and direct means of accessing the other. These too, in a sense, tend to reduce the importance of intention and consciousness, though not in order to privilege a fixed set of hidden causes, but rather to overcome the usual neglect of the non-cognitive factors in interpersonal relations. When Lomas 'feels' hesitancy in his patient's request to use the loo and responds 'spontaneously', he *is* 'interpreting' her behavior — not in the sense of consciously articulating and verbalizing an interpretation and acting upon it, but in the sense of detecting 'intuitively' a problem and responding, also intuitively, to it. Outside psychotherapy, there are also interesting incursions of the 'experiential' directly on the 'semantic', such as the now quite popular experiential theory of metaphor and its generalization to all of semantics.[17]

So, poor old interpretation, at first accused of expansionism, it becomes now the victim of its neighbors' expansionism. The phrase 'the limits of interpretation', if seen as it were from within the territory of interpretation, may now refer to an attempt to build a fence to protect a threatened species. It is to this point of view that we turn now our attention.

The target of all the attacks on interpretation that underlie the proposal of the various alternative models discussed so far is the idea that interpreting, say, a speaker's utterance, consists in, first and foremost, determining what the speaker consciously and purposefully means or intends by that utterance when s/he utters it. The cryptographic model contends that what the speaker means can only be what his or her words mean, no more and no less than that. The causal model contends that the speaker's conscious intentions are in fact irrelevant; they are at most symptoms of his real, deep motives; it is these that count and should be determined. The experiential model contends that what is important is the empathy established between two feeling, compassionate persons, regardless of what they consciously intend to convey to each other.

The hermeneutic model contends that the speaker (author, patient, therapist, or whoever) is not the actual *locus* of meaning; that there is no such a thing as a 'speaker's meaning' to be 'discovered', and that meaning is, first and foremost, the creation of the interpreter himself.

We contend that the target of these attacks is a valuable, important, and central — though not all encompassing — aspect of human interaction, that should be preserved and accounted for, namely *intentionality*.[18] Every action contains an intentional element.[19] This is what distinguishes actions from mere happenings. Communicative action is no exception: communication is a goal-directed activity, where the agent musters the means to achieve his or her communicative purpose. Understanding the other's communicative acts is being able to determine the other's intention(s) in performing them.[20] For this purpose, to understand the codified meanings of the other's words or gestures — i.e., their semantics — is not sufficient, though usually necessary. Recall that the understanding of indirect speech acts, metaphor, irony, implicatures, etc. requires the use of contextual information of all sorts, verbal and non-verbal: about the interactants' feelings, motives, expectation, beliefs, knowledge (of the other, of the shared codes of a culture or a language), as well as about the concrete situation where communication takes place. To extract from the multifarious interplay between the codified meaning of what has been said or done by someone and that person's intention in saying or doing that in that context, i.e., what s/he *meant* by his or her action, is to perform *pragmatic interpretation*. The discipline of *pragmatics* studies the principles that explain this achievement.[21] And, although commonplace, it is quite an achievement! In spite of the multiplicity of contextual factors and their variability, communication succeeds more often than not. It may not reach the pinnacles of Buberian full dialogue, but it normally achieves its more modest purposes, in conversation, debate, reading, non-verbal communication, and also in therapeutic practice. This success means that pragmatic interpretation is not the whimsical creation of the interpreter, but rather corresponds, to some extent at least, to the speaker's/agent's communicative intentions. If we want to respect the individual, we cannot overlook or eliminate his or her intentions. The territory of pragmatic interpretation must be preserved. It can coexist peacefully with its neighbors, provided each — including pragmatics — recognizes its limits and the legitimacy of each other.

The imperialistic tendencies of pragmatic interpretation — of the assignment of conscious intentionality to human agents/speakers — can be seen in

what happened to Lewis Carroll's *Snark*. Readers simply cannot avoid the temptation to discover the author's intention. A nineteen-old girl writes to him: "Why don't you explain the *Snark*?", and Carroll replies: "Because I can't. Are you able to explain things which you don't yourself understand?" (Carroll 1973: 22). To a group of children he writes:

> As to the meaning of the *Snark*? I'm very afraid I didn't mean anything but nonsense! Still, you know, words mean more than we mean to express when we use them: so a whole book ought to mean a great deal more than the writer meant. So, whatever good meanings are in the book, I'm very glad to accept as the meaning of the book (ibid.).

Our search for the author's intention amounts to a strong *presumption of intentionality* concerning communicative acts.[22] We see the nonsense word 'Snark' (as well as other such words in the text) as a blank, a variable, an invitation to complete, on the basis of co-textual information, the author's meaning (i.e., intention) in using it. What Carroll is granting to his readers is the liberty to create interpretations of their own — the kind of liberty emphasized by the hermeneutic model. And yet, the power of the presumption of intentionality is such that the readers hesitate in using this liberty.

In order to countenance all the forms of interpretive imperialism discussed above, we propose an eclectic, non-reductionistic (and hence, non-imperialistic) view of interpretation. For this purpose, let us be granted the liberty of using the term 'interpretation' in a very broad sense — perhaps the sense that corresponds best to the claim that "all behavior in an interactional situation has message value, i.e., is communication" (Watzlawick et al. 1967: 48).[23] In this broad sense, interpretation can be viewed as encompassing all of the models we have discussed above.

What makes this 'all encompassing' view non-imperialistic is precisely its eclecticism, namely, the acknowledgment that all of the models of interpretation have some validity, albeit limited. From this point of view, each particular model — including 'pragmatic interpretation' — represents a special kind of emphasis, which does not necessarily exclude the others. Each can be resorted to, as the occasion requires. None is subordinated to some over-arching 'super-interpretation' theory. What this picture suggests is a pluralistic approach to 'interpretation', that does justice to the omnipresence of interpretation with which we began this essay, while at the same time guarding us against the various forms its threatening imperialism may take. Such a picture corresponds to the trivial observation that human behavior is extraordinarily

complex and results from a multiplicity of causes and reasons. Accordingly, any reductionistic attempt to interpret human behavior in terms of a single cause or to privilege a class of causes at the expense of the others is doomed to failure. The models of interpretation criticized by Lomas and Eco, as well as some versions of the alternatives they suggest, are guilty of such an expansionism. Once divested from this tendency, they can become part of the eclectic family of 'interpretation modes'.

The implications of this eclecticism for psychotherapeutic practice and for human interaction in general are far-reaching, as the following examples show.

Consider, first, the much-debated case of 'recovered memories' of child abuse episodes.[24] Some patients who have 'recovered' such memories under therapy have sued their therapists for 'planting' the memories in their minds (and thereby causing irreversible damage to their family relations). Leaving aside the (very important) issue of malpractice, such cases raise in a particularly acute way the question of the limits of interpretation. If the patients' charges are correct, presumably what happened is roughly this: the therapist relied exclusively on a specific blueprint for interpretation; the authority of the therapist and of the theory that supports such an interpretation is such that the patient tends to accept it on scant evidence; once accepted, it is able to 'explain' a wide array of hitherto unexplained, 'mysterious' episodes (past and present); this explanatory 'success', in turn, confirms, for patient and therapist alike, the interpretation's 'truth'. The circularity of the procedure is evident if looked from the 'outside'. But it is very difficult to break the circle from the 'inside', i.e., as long as one relies only on the patient's recollections, since these are likely to be re-organized and even created in the light of the therapist's interpretation. In such cases, interpretation overflows its limits by creating 'reality'. The converse case is that of a therapist systematically interpreting as mere 'fantasies' child abuse episodes spontaneously reported by patients. In such cases, interpretation equally overflows its limits by denying the 'reality' of what may well have truly happened.

In cases such as these, access to relevant contextual information is usually quite difficult. In the absence of additional information, any interpretation remains highly tentative. Consequently, no matter how strong the therapist's belief in his/her theoretical framework, he should be aware of such a tentative character and be open for alternative interpretations, eventually based on other theoretical frameworks. He should also be highly sensitive to the prag-

matic peculiarities of the therapeutic situation, such as its inherent asymmetry (the layman facing the expert; the person in need of help facing the person who is supposed to help), which bestows upon the therapist's remarks an authoritative status, even when s/he does not intend them to bear it; or the patient's 'cooperative drive' (willingness to 'please' the therapist or to justify the effort spent in therapy), which may lead her to 'produce' corroborating evidence for the proposed interpretation. These and similar factors show the intrinsic limitations of a fixed mode of interpretation and prevent, when taken into account, its imperialism.

The same is true of all the models discussed. A clinical psychologist was recently found guilty by an Israeli court for engaging in sexual relations with his female patients. He argued that he was thereby preparing them — through 'simulation' in the protected conditions of the therapeutic setting — to overcome their difficulty in developing normal relations with men.[25] He might be following to its extreme consequences the experiential model's advice to be (com)passionate towards his patients, to heed to their and (mainly) his own feelings, to impart to them a 'knowing how', rather than a merely intellectual 'knowing that'. Such a possibility doesn't mean that the advice is, generally, unsound. It only shows — if our hypothesis is correct — its limitations. Had the psychologist taken the patients' resistance to such a treatment not as mere 'symptoms', but as expressing their pondered, responsible and conscious reservations about his proposals, he could have spared himself the unpleasant experience of going to jail.

"Don't take a 'No' for a no" — might be the maxim followed by the perpetrators of some kinds of rape. A 'No' — so the rapist's logic goes — is in fact a 'Yes'. He is thereby stretching beyond recognition a legitimate principle of pragmatic interpretation (used, for example, in interpreting irony). While the pragmatic principle in question can only be used in the light of contextual indications that the utterance was meant to be interpreted non-literally, the rapist conveniently ignores such a requirement. While the pragmatic principle suggests a *possible* line of interpretation, the rapist employs his rule in a fixed, mandatory manner. When Justice Michael Hasin ruled, in his verdict in a recent collective rape trial brought before the Israel Supreme Court, that "when a woman says 'No' she means no",[26] he was perhaps too strict in admitting only literal, cryptographic interpretation. But, under the circumstances, he was soundly reminding us that the freedom of pragmatic interpretation has its limits.

These dramatic and traumatic cases only highlight what occurs incessantly in our daily life. We are constantly required to interpret facts, opinion polls, trends, utterances, gestures, facial expressions — what not. Interpretive activity is perhaps the most demanding activity we engage in. And yet, we conduct it for the most part successfully (and also somewhat casually), and tend to trust the reliability of the model(s) of interpretation we use. When a difficult case arises, we would also wish to be able to resort to the unquestionable authority of this or that model of interpretation or of some expert to help us in this complex task. Unfortunately — or perhaps fortunately — we can't, simply because no single model or expert is capable of supplying us with the tools for achieving reasonable interpretations in every case. Only the judicious selection of the appropriate tool for the case at hand can prevent the disastrous results of the dogmatism inherent in the blind belief in the efficacy of any one of them. Ultimately, we must exercise our own judgment in assessing the often conflicting claims of experts and lay persons, claims that usually rely upon different models of interpretation.

To exercise judgment is precisely to be able, on the one hand, to see things from different perspectives, i.e., to shift from one mode to another, thus yielding different interpretations, and, on the other, not to be paralyzed thereby, i.e., not to refrain from choosing and acting accordingly. How this is done in practice is the million-dollar question, which we do not pretend to be able to answer. What we can say, on the theoretical level, is that the eclecticism we advocate does not entail paralysis. First, because not all modes of interpretation are *equally* suitable to all situations, so that, for any given situation, there is a presumption in favor of one of these modes over the others. Second, because precisely by treating the superiority of any one mode as presumptive (i.e., defeasible), it allows for its abandonment when it doesn't work, rather than to persist in trying to apply it no matter what; and this paves the way for seeing alternatives (originating in other modes of interpretation) that otherwise one would overlook. On a more practical level, this openness to alternative modes does not mean that the therapist is spineless and conducts his or her work amorphously, shifting from one perspective to another relentlessly. All people — therapists included — are shaped by a formative context, which yields basic categories and forms of thinking. New experiences and ways of operating are absorbed in so far as they can be made to fit these basic conceptual structures, i.e., in so far as they become an integral part thereof. What the eclectic point of view permits is for the therapist to handle more flexibly —

and therefore more receptively — his or her conceptual framework, thus letting it integrate a richer gamut of otherwise inaccessible tools. Based on the clinical experience of one of us, we can testify that it works.

Our conclusion, then, is that the phrase 'the limits of interpretation' should be interpreted as referring to the fact that *all* extant modes and models of interpretation are, at best, only partially valid and useful. Their use must be subjected to a sensitive system of checks and balances, in order to avoid the sorts of transgressions of limits pointed out above. Such a system, however, is not to be sought in an encompassing meta-theory of interpretation, but rather in the competing and complementing use of the different models of interpretation *in any given case*. Interpretation, after all, is too important in our lives to be left in the hands of any particular group of 'experts'.

Notes

1. Both Leibniz and Borges contend that the number of different books of a given length is finite, though very big. In order to make this compatible with his further 'axiom' that the Library (i.e., the Universe) is infinite, Borges has to assume that books are *exactly* repeated. Since he wants also to preserve 'order', he assumes that this repetition is periodical, i.e., that the Library is composed of 'periods' each of which is exactly the same as the preceding one.

2. "Concepts, Spence believes, gain currency in proportion to the frequency with which they are used and the prestige of the users, not because they have intrinsic value and accuracy" (Lomas 1990: 28). The reference is to the American psychoanalyst Donald Spence's *Narrative Truth and Historical Truth*.

3. This corresponds to C.S. Peirce's notion of interpretation as an endless 'chain of interpretants'.

4. Projective tests such as the Rorschach are in fact based on the assumption that people will actually 'find' significant patterns in random figures. In an experiment on the 'understanding' of movement/dance performances, we found that subjects feel that abstract dance is more difficult to 'understand' and 'enjoy', in so far as it does not display familiar patterns or a plot (cf. Chapter 17). The same relentless search for some sort of 'meaning' occurs, of course, in non-experimental circumstances. People 'discern' faces in clouds, gods in star clusters, omens in coincidences, hidden intentions in every tone of voice or frown; gamblers 'discover' the laws that allow them to predict the next results of a slot machine; etc.

5. "What is clear is not to be interpreted". For discussion of this maxim of legal interpretation, see Chapter 15a, where we contend, among other things, that 'transparent' interpretation of something that is 'clear' is also a form of interpretation.

6. For a detailed analysis of this example, see Dascal and Weizman (1990). For the notion of 'mismatch', see Chapter 8a.

7. In 1901 the philosophical journal *Mind* devoted a special (humorous? parody?) issue devoted to Carroll's ballad. A Snark Club exists in England up to this day. This, and other information below about the Snark is based on Martin Gardner's edition (Carroll 1973). We are grateful to Shlomit Dascal for bringing this edition to our attention.

8. To wit *La Chasse au Snark* (transl. Louis Aragon 1929); *La Caccia allo Snarco* (transl. Cesare Vico Lodovici 1945); *Die Jagd nach dem Schnark* (transl. Klaus Reichert 1972).

9. The English translator of the book, Barbara Bray, devised an interesting solution to the problem: she simply did not translate the title, but kept it in French (her translation was published in 1968 by Grove Press, New York). On page 76, she adds a translator's note, which is supposed to explain the puzzle: "In the French text Pierre specifies Claire's mistakes: instead of "la menthe anglaise" she put "l'amante" (feminine for lover) and "en glaise" (made of clay or sand)".

10. Eco has, besides the hermeneuticists and deconstructionists, other opponents in mind, namely those that commit the (extreme forms of the) so-called 'intentional fallacy' — the heresy (for structuralist literary critics) of admitting that an author's intentions are what ultimately counts as sole determinant of the interpretation of the text. Semantics, being not under subjective control either of the author or of the interpreter, is the ideal ground for a structuralist to protect.

11. Lomas himself acknowledges that taking into account the "factors in the partnership that engender mutual warmth, respect and trust ... is a formidable undertaking because it requires us to study the kind of subtleties that enter into all relationships, the understanding of which has already taxed all the endeavours of the human race" (Lomas 1990: 148).

12. In this respect, classification functions as a quite common 'strategy of understanding'. See Chapter 3.

13. On the 'cryptographic' model and on the other models of interpretation discussed below, see Chapter 30.

14. The reference is to Heaton (1972).

15. Ryle (1966). On the use of the Rylean distinction in accounting for art understanding see Chapter 17, and in creative arts therapy, see V. Dascal (1985).

16. "In spite of criticism within the [psychoanalytic] movement itself of Freud's emphasis on the primacy of cognitive thinking and attempts to draw psychoanalysis into the discipline of hermeneutics, both theory and practice have remained enthralled by the prestige of physical science, and analytic interpretation is such that the practitioner remains in danger of pre-judging matters on the basis of his theories of unconscious mechanisms. He is not simply seeking to know his patient; he is specifically focusing on aspects of the patient that are amenable to his theory" (Lomas 1990: 41). The same 'theory-ladenness' of 'observation' occurs also in the physical sciences, as pointed out by those philosophers who endeavor to 'de-construct' the 'myth of the given' (Sellars and Kuhn, for example).

17. A pioneering work in this direction was Lakoff and Johnson's *Metaphors We Live By* (1980). More recent inquiries in this line can be found in Johnson (1987), Lakoff (1987) and

Lakoff and Turner (1989). For applications of this approach to creative arts therapy, see V. Dascal (1991) and (1992). See also Chapter 11.

18. In this respect, our position should be viewed as belonging to the philosophical tradition that refuses to reduce intentionality (both in the general sense of 'aboutness' or 'directedness' of our mental states and in the particular sense of 'intending to do' something) to usual forms of causality. This tradition includes Brentano, who considered 'intentionality' (in its general sense) as the mark of the mental; Grice, who articulated an intention-based semantics and pragmatics; Davidson, who insisted on 'reasons' as opposed to 'causes' as the basis for explaining human action; and Searle (1992c), who argues for the uniqueness of intentionality and consciousness. In our view there is no communication — properly conceived — without communicative intentions (see Chapters 1 and 29).

19. This does not mean, of course, that there aren't *unintentional* actions. Such actions are, roughly, those an agent performs with one intention, while by virtue of circumstances the agent is (possibly) not aware of, they count (socially) as actions performed under another intention. A typical case is Oedipus who, marrying Jocasta, unintentionally marries his mother. For an analysis of unintentional action, see Dascal and Gruengard (1981).

20. Recent research in pragmatics and dialogue analysis shows that there is a process of 'negotiation' between speaker and addressee regarding the determination of the speaker's intention, rather than a full determination of the former by the speaker alone, prior to his or her utterance (see, for example, Clark 1992 and Brassac 1994). The role of 'joint' or 'collective' intentions, non reducible to individual intentions, is also important in this respect (see Chapter 5). Both kinds of consideration, however, do not seriously question the primary role of the agent/speaker as the intentional originator of his or her acts/utterances.

21. It should be noted that we are referring here only to one branch of pragmatics, namely 'sociopragmatics', which is concerned with the use of language in communication. In so far as language has other uses, pragmatics comprises other branches as well (e.g., the use of language in conducting mental operations belongs to 'psychopragmatics'). On the distinction between psycho- and socio-pragmatics, see Chapters 16 and 18.

22. Notice that this is not the same as the presumption of meaning, which applies also to happenings.

23. For criticism of this claim, see Chapter 29.

24. See, for example, *TIME Magazine*, November 19, 1993: 44-55.

25. *Yedioth Ahronoth*, December 12, 1993: 5.

26. *Ma'ariv*, December 11, 1993: 3.

Sources and acknowledgments

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   This is a revised version of the paper I read at the colloquium on meaning and use in memory of Yehoshua Bar-Hillel, held in Jerusalem, April 25-30, 1976. I wish to thank Helmut Schnelle and the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft for the financial support which made possible the preparation of part of this work (Project AZ Schn 113/10, 'Semantische Relationen'). I am grateful also to Ruth Manor for her helpful suggestions in the course of the preparation of this manuscript, and to Mark Glouberman for his comments on an early draft.
3. Strategies of understanding
   Dascal, M. 1981. "Strategies of understanding". In H. Parret and J. Bouveresse (eds.), *Meaning and Understanding*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 327-352.
   Presented at the International Conference on Meaning and Understanding, at Cérisy-la-Sale (France), 1979. I am grateful to the organizers of this exciting conference and editors of the volume.
4. Two modes of understanding
   Dascal, M. and Berenstein, I. 1987. "Two modes of understanding: Comprehending and grasping". *Language and Communication* 7: 139-151.
   I am grateful to my co-author Isidoro Berenstein for the many hours of fruitful interdisciplinary discussion in the Tel Hashomer Hospital near Tel Aviv, which led to this paper. I wish to thank the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities and Social Sciences (NIAS), where the revision of this paper was carried out, while I was a fellow there. In particular I thank Marina Voerman for typing the manuscript.
5. Individual and collective intentions

Dascal, M. and Idan, A. 1989. "From individual to collective action". In F. Vandamme and R. Pinxten (eds.), *The Philosophy of Leo Apostel - Descriptive and Critical Essays*. Ghent: Communication and Cognition, 133-148.

I thank Asher Idan for joining me in writing this paper in honor of Leo Apostel. The paper was written before collective intentions called the attention of philosophers, AI specialists and others, but its publication was unfortunately delayed for a number of years.

6. How does a connective work?

Dascal, M. and Katriel, T. 1977. "Between semantics and pragmatics: The two types of 'but' - Hebrew 'aval' and 'ela'". *Theoretical Linguistics* 4: 143-172.

My cooperation with Tamar Katriel has been as intense as it was fruitful, and I thank her very much for that. The research for this paper was partially supported by a grant from the Israel Commission for Basic Research. We thank Oswald Ducrot and a referee for their criticisms and many helpful suggestions, and the editor of the journal, Helmut Schnelle, for his encouragement.

7. Commitment and involvement

Katriel, T. and Dascal, M. 1989. "Speaker's commitment and involvement". In Y. Tobin (ed.), *From Sign to Text: A Semiotic View of Communication*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 275-295.

My thanks for Tamar Katriel for suggesting to me this important theme of research. We are grateful to Michael Stubbs for helpful comments on this paper.

8. Clues, cues, and context

8a. Dascal, M. and Weizman, E. 1987. "Contextual exploitation of interpretation clues in text understanding: An integrated model". In J. Verschueren and M. Bertucelli-Papi, (eds.), *The Pragmatic Perspective*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 31-46.

Presented at the International Pragmatics Conference, Viarreggio (Italy), 1985. I thank Elda Weizman for a cooperation that still continues to bear fruit.

8b. Weizman, E. and Dascal, M. 1991. "On clues and cues: Strategies of text understanding". *Journal of Literary Semantics* 20(1): 18-30.

9. Models of interpretation

Dascal, M. 1992. "Models of interpretation". In M. Stamenov (ed.), *Current Advances in Semantic Theory*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 109-127.

Presented at the International Symposium "Models of Meaning", Druzhba (Bulgaria), 1988. I thank M. Stamenov, convener of the Symposium and editor of the volume.

10. Understanding digressions

Dascal, M. and Katriel, T. 1979. "Digressions: A study in conversational coherence". *PTL - Poetics and Theory of Literature* 4: 203-232.

11. Understanding a metaphor

Dascal, M. 1996. "The Beyond Enterprise". In J. Stewart (ed.), *Beyond the Symbol Model*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 303-334.

This article was written while I was a fellow of the Institute for Advanced Studies, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem. I wish to thank the Institute for its generous and efficient support. I wish also to thank Alan Gross, a fellow member of the Institute's research group "Leibniz the Polemicist: The pragmatics of theory formation and evolution", who read earlier versions of this text and provided useful comments. I also thank John Stewart for his stimulating invitation and helpful suggestions.

12. Three remarks on pragmatics and literature

Dascal, M. 2000. Opening address at the Colloquium "Pragmatics and Literature", organized by the Department of French, 9 January 2000, Tel Aviv University.

13. Understanding controversies

Dascal, M. 1989. "Controversies as quasi-dialogues". In E. Weigand and F. Hundsnurcher (eds.), *Dialoganalyse* II, vol. 1. Tübingen: Niemeyer, 147-159.

Presented at the International Workshop on Dialogue Analysis, Bochum (Germany), 1988.

14. Understanding misunderstanding

14a. Dascal, M. 1999. "Some questions about misunderstanding". *Journal of Pragmatics* 31:753-762.

Introduction to the *Journal of Pragmatics* Special Issue on "Misunderstanding".

14b. Dascal, M. 1985. "The relevance of misunderstanding". In M. Dascal (ed.), *Dialogue — An Interdisciplinary Approach*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 441-460.

Presented at the First International Encounter on the Philosophy of Language, Campinas (Brasil), 1981. I wish to thank all my colleagues in the Department of Linguistics of the Universidade Estadual de Campinas that were so helpful in organizing this memorable Encounter.

15. Interpreting the Law

15a. Dascal, M. and Wróblewski, J. † 1988. "Transparency and doubt: Understanding and interpretation in pragmatics and in law". *Law and Philosophy* 7:203-224.

We thank Dennis Kurzon for helpful remarks on an early draft.

15b. Dascal, M. and Wróblewski, J. 1991. "The rational lawmaker and the pragmatics of legal interpretation". *Journal of Pragmatics* 15:421-444.

I wish to thank Jerzy Wróblewski for our exciting and intense meeting of minds across disciplines. Unfortunately, what began as a very promising cooperation was abruptly interrupted by Jerszy's early death. I dedicate the inclusion of these two articles in this volume to his memory.

16. Understanding jokes and dreams

Dascal, M. 1985. "Language use in jokes and dreams: Sociopragmatics vs. psychopragmatics". *Language and Communication* 5:95-106.

17. Understanding art

Dascal, M. and Dascal, V. 1985. "Understanding art as knowing how". In A. Balis et al. (eds.), *Art in Culture*, vol. 2. Ghent: Communication and Cognition, 271-298.

Thanks to Varda for engaging me in this project and for teaching me so much about dance. We would like to thank J. Agassi, H. Marantz, G. Moked and B. Scharfstein for suggestions and comments on an earlier draft of this paper. We are particularly grateful to the members of the Philosophy Department of Ben-Gurion University (Beer-Sheva) and to the students of the Department of Theatre (Tel-Aviv University) for their help in conducting the experiment here alluded to.

18. Why does language matter to Artificial Intelligence?

Dascal, M. 1992. "Why does language matter to artificial intelligence?". *Mind and Machines* 2(2):145-174 [Also in J. Lopes Alves (ed.), *Information Technology and Society: Theory, Uses, Impacts*. Lisboa: APDC and SPF, 1992, 109-127].

Presented at the International Conference "Communication, Meaning, and Knowledge vis-à-vis the New Technologies", Lisboa (Portugal), 1989, organized by João Lopes Alves, whom I thank very much for inviting me to cooperate with him in this project. I am grateful to Adam Tanenbaum for sharing with me his expertise in Heidegger, and to Itiel Dror for comments on a version of this paper.

19. Pragmatics in the Digital Age

Dresner, E. and Dascal, M. 2001. "Semantics, pragmatics, and the digital information age". *Studies in Communication Sciences* 1:1-22.

Thanks to Eli Dresner for the effort to combine our ideas and projects for unraveling the complexities of the Digital Age.

20. Interpretation and tolerance

Dascal, M. 1989. "Tolerance and interpretation". In Z. Rosen and Z. Tauber (eds.), *Violence and Tolerance*. Tel Aviv: Papyrus, 157-172. [in Hebrew].

Presented at the yearly conference of the Israeli Association of Philosophy, on "Violence and Tolerance", Tel-Aviv, April 1987.

21. Understanding other cultures

Dascal, M. 1991. "The ecology of cultural space". In M. Dascal (ed.), *Cultural Relativism and Philosophy: North and Latin American Perspectives*. Leiden: Brill, 279-295.

Parts of this essay were read in Mexico City, at the VIII Symposium of Philosophy of the Instituto de Investigaciones Filosóficas, U.N.A.M., August 1988. I

benefited from comments and discussion by J. Margolis, L. Olivé, R. Orayen, M. Platts, F. Salmerón, and M. Valdéz. Lenn Goodman made very useful suggestions on an early version. The essay was completed in the metropolitan area of Tel Aviv, in January/February 1991, whenever Iraqi missiles did not prevent me from thinking. I wish to thank Adam Tanenbaum for his careful reading of the last draft, and Varda Dascal for her suggestions and support.

22. Why should I ask her?

Dascal, M. 1985. "Why should I ask her?". In R. H. Chisholm et al. (eds.), *Philosophy of Mind – Philosophy of Psychology*. Vienna: Hö1der-Pichler-Tempsky, 571-576.

Presented at the 9th International Wittgenstein Symposium, Kirchberg (Austria), 1984.

23. Speech act theory and pragmatics: An uneasy couple

Dascal, M. 1994. "Speech act theory and Gricean pragmatics". In S. L. Tsohatzidis (ed.), *Foundations of Speech Act Theory: Philosophical and Linguistic Perspectives*. London: Routledge, 323-334.

24. The pragmatic structure of conversation

Dascal, M. 1992. "On the pragmatic structure of conversation". In H. Parret and J. Verschueren (eds.), *(On) Searle on Conversation*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 35-56.

25. Contextualism

Dascal, M. 1981. "Contextualism". In H. Parret, M. Sbisà and J. Verschueren (eds.), *Possibilities and Limitations of Pragmatics*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 153-177.

Presented at the Conference on the Possibilities and Limitations of Pragmatics, Urbino (Italy), 1979.

26. Does pragmatics need semantics?

26a. Dascal, M. 1987. "Defending literal meaning". *Cognitive Science* 1:259-281.

I am grateful to the Netherlands Institute for Research in the Humanities and Social Sciences (NIAS), where work on this paper has been conducted. I wish to thank Elda Weizman and Edson Françozo for their comments on a draft, as well as two anonymous referees whose comments were very helpful.

26b. Dascal, M. 1989. "On the roles of context and literal meaning in understanding". *Cognitive Science* 13:253-257.

I am grateful to the editors of *Cognitive Science* for inviting me to respond to Gibbs's reply to Dascal (1987). In preparing the present paper, I benefited from helpful discussion and comments by Varda Dascal, Elda Weizman, and Shoshana Blum-Kulka.

27. Pragmatics and foundationalism

Dascal, M. 1992. "Pragmatics and foundationalism". *Journal of Pragmatics* 17:455-460.

Invited comments for a *Journal of Pragmatics* Special Issue on Bickhard and Campbell.

28. The marriage of pragmatics and rhetoric

Dascal, M. and Gross, A. G. 1999. "The marriage of pragmatics and rhetoric". *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 32(2):107-130.

My deepest thanks to Alan for the continuing and very fruitful cooperation between us, which illustrates the kind of intellectual and interdisciplinary marriage this paper talks about.

29. Hermeneutic interpretation and pragmatic interpretation

Dascal, M. 1989. "Hermeneutic interpretation and pragmatic interpretation". *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 22(4):239-259.

I would like to thank John Stewart for challenging me to undertake this comparison. Of course, he is not to blame for the results.

30. The limits of interpretation

Dascal, M. and Dascal, V. 1996. "The limits of interpretation". In J. Rozenberg (ed.), *Sense and Nonsense: Philosophical, Clinical and Ethical Perspectives*. Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 203-223.

Presented at the International Conference on Sense and Nonsense in Psychotherapy and Philosophy, Ramat Gan (Israel), 1993. Many Thanks to Varda for yet another piece of our continuing intellectual and personal partnership. We wish to thank Gordon Globus, Roy G. Harris, and Meir Sternberg for their helpful comments on earlier versions of this paper.

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