

PHIL 4233: Philosophy of Language
Prof. Funkhouser
Grice, “Logic and Conversation”

- Recall from our earlier Grice reading (“Meaning”) that Grice puts speaker meaning before sentence meaning (i.e., sentence meaning is to be understood in terms of speaker meaning/intention). (Slogan: Psychology explains semantics.) He, along with J.L. Austin, was an ordinary language philosopher who respected ordinary language and thought it was logical. We see him developing a logic of ordinary language (conversation) in this paper.
- In “Logic and Conversation” Grice provides a systematic explanation of how our utterances have meaning beyond their literal interpretations. Recall that this speech act unit is under the category of pragmatics. In part, pragmatics concerns how contextual considerations contribute to meaning. This may read a lot more like rules for rhetoric, or just plain etiquette, than philosophy.
- The formalists and informalists are mistaken — formal logic and natural language do not diverge.
- Distinguish: “what is said” and “what is implicated”
- Cooperative Principle: “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.”

From this principle, Grice generates 4 maxims: Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner.

- Grice provides 4 ways to fail to fulfill a maxim.
- We discern that an implicature has occurred when we see that a speaker has flouted one of these maxims, while not giving up on the Cooperative Principle. The best way to make the speaker’s utterance seem appropriate is to attribute the implicature.