



# Studies in the Way of Words

*Paul Grice*

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### Studies in the Way of Words Paul Grice

This volume, Grice's first book, includes the long-delayed publication of his enormously influential 1967 William James Lectures. But there is much, much more in this work. Paul Grice himself has carefully arranged and framed the sequence of essays to emphasize not a certain set of ideas but a habit of mind, a style of philosophizing.

Grice has, to be sure, provided philosophy with crucial ideas. His account of speaker-meaning is the standard that others use to define their own minor divergences or future elaborations. His discussion of conversational implicatures has given philosophers an important tool for the investigation of all sorts of problems; it has also laid the foundation for a great deal of work by other philosophers and linguists about presupposition. His metaphysical defense of absolute values is starting to be considered the beginning of a new phase in philosophy. This is a vital book for all who are interested in Anglo-American philosophy.

### Studies in the Way of Words Details

Date : Published April 1st 1991 by Harvard University Press (first published April 26th 1989)

ISBN : 9780674852716

Author : Paul Grice

Format : Paperback 406 pages

Genre : Philosophy, Humanities, Linguistics, Language, Nonfiction, Writing

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## Charles says

This book was a fun read. It's very dense at times but was seldom uninteresting. It covers several topics primarily concerned with everyday conversation. These include comprehensive discussions of the notion of meaning, the relation of logical connectives (or, and, if) to our everyday ones, the notion of implying, and some other scattered topics like the senses and the analytic/synthetic distinction. The discussion of implying, what Grice calls conversational implicature, was neat. He makes the case that conversation is a rational, cooperative exchange that follows a collection of guiding principles. And when we imply something, we violate one (or more) of those principles, and what we imply is what would have to be true for us to still be making sense. Over the course of the book he also responds to other philosophers' claims as well, including an interesting essay about The Republic. Because it's long and not a novel, I don't think I would recommend in general, but I would recommend it to someone specially interested in language. I came to it because it was mentioned in The Language Instinct.

## Lane Wilkinson says

I decided to start writing a paper relating Grice's conversational maxims to the reference interview. We'll see what happens.

## Aleksandar Janjic says

Grice's theory of conversational implicature is a central part of his theory of meaning. It is a theory of how we can understand more than what is literally said. For example, if someone says "It's raining", we might understand that they are suggesting we should take an umbrella. This is called a conversational implicature. Grice's theory is based on the idea that conversation is a cooperative exchange. We assume that our conversational partners are following certain principles, or maxims, of conversation. If they violate one of these maxims, we can infer that they are implying something else. Grice's theory is a very important part of the study of language and communication.

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"(VI) The fulfillment of the task just outlined will need to be supplemented by an account of the elements in the conventional meaning of an utterance which are *not* part of what has been said. This account, at least for an important subclass of such elements, might take the following shape:

- (1) The problematic elements are linked with certain speech-acts which are exhibited as posterior to, and such that their performance is dependent upon, some member or disjunction of members of the central range; for example, the meaning of 'moreover' would be linked with the speech-act of adding, the performance of which would require the performance of one or another of the central speech-acts.
- (2) If Z-ing is such a noncentral speech-act, the dependence of Z-ing that \*p upon the performance of some central speech-act would have to be shown to be of a nature which justifies a reluctance to treat Z-ing that \*p as a case not merely of saying that \*p but also of saying that #p, or of saying that #\*p, where '#p' or '#\*p' is a representation of one or more sentential forms specifically associated with Z-ing (as 'moreover' is specifically associated with the speech-act of adding).
- (3) The notion of Z-ing that \*p (where Z-ing is noncentral) would be explicated in terms of the notion of *meaning that* (or in terms of some important elements in the definition of that notion)."

...

"(4) In a model sequence these intentions are fulfilled. For a model sequence to succeed in correlating the word 'shaggy' with the property of being hairy-coated, it seems necessary (and perhaps also sufficient) that there should be some relation R which holds between the word 'shaggy' and each hairy-coated thing, y, just in case y is hairy-coated. Can such a relation R be specified? Perhaps at least in a sequence of model cases, in which U's linguistic intentions are rewarded by success, it can; the relation between the word 'shaggy' and each hairy-coated object y would be the relation which holds between each plainly hairy-coated object y and the word 'shaggy' and which consists in the fact that y is a thing to which U does and would apply, rather than refuse to apply, the word 'shaggy'. In other words in a limited universe consisting of things which in U's view are either plainly hairy-coated or plainly not hairy-coated, the relation R holds only between the word 'shaggy' and each object which is for U plainly hairy-coated."

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